DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 331 CE 052 712

TITLE	Hearing on the Reauthorization of VISTA. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Select Education of the Committee on Education and Labor. House of Representatives, One Hundred First Congress, First Session.
INSTITUTION	Congress of the U.S., Washington, D.C. House Committee on Education and Labor.
PUB DATE	23 Feb 89
NOTE	153p.; Serial No. 101-5.
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.
PUB TYPE	Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; Poverty; *Poverty Programs; *Social Agencies; *Voluntary Agencies
IDENTIFIERS	Reauthorization Legislation; *Volunteers in Service to America

ABSTRACT

This document reports on a congressional oversight hearing on the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Program on its 25th anniversary. This hearing is also the opening hearing toward the reauthorization of VISTA, the Federal Government's only full-time domestic volunteer service to alleviate poverty-related problems. Testimony includes statements and prepared statements of U.S. senators and representatives and individuals representing ACTION; City of El Paso's Gang Intervention Program; U.S. District Court, Minneapolis, Minnesota; National Child Labor Committee; VISTA; Peninsula Literacy Council, Hampton, Virginia; Office of Economic Opportunity; Special Olympics International; and National Council on the Aging. (YLB)

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HEARING ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF VISTA

ED308331

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIRST CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, FEBRUARY 23, 1989

Serial No. 101-5

Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and Labor

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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HEARING ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF VISTA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1989

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:40 a.m., in Room 2257, Rayburn House Office Building, the Honorable Major R. Owens [chairman] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Martinez, Payne, Jontz, Mfume, Bartlett, Ballenger and Smith.

Staff present: Maria Cuprill, Jillian Evans, Braden Goetz, Wanser R. Green, Gary Granofsky, and Laurence Peters.

Chairman OWENS. The hearing of the Subcommittee on Select Education of the Committee on Education and Labor will come to order.

This is an oversight hearing on the VISTA Program, the 25th anniversary of that program. We are here today to commemorate the 25th anniversary of a great American ideal, the Volunteers In Service to America Program. VISTA is the federal government's only full-time domestic volunteer service. First proposed by President Kennedy as a national service corps which would mobilize American's to fight poverty here at home, much as the Peace Corps fought poverty abroad; the VISTA Program was later revived by President Johnson and incorporated in his "War on Poverty" proposals, which were enacted as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Volunteers serve for one year, working full time with public and private nonprofit agencies to establish and expand programs to alleviate poverty related problems. VISTA volunteers receive a modest subsistence allowance while in service and are expected to live among the same low income people that they serve.

During the last quarter of a century, 100,000 Americans from all walks of life, ages, economic levels and geographic areas have served as VISTA volunteers. Their achievements have been extraordinary.

VISTA volunteers have helped to create job training programs, health clinics, battered women's shelters, food pantries, homeless shelters and permanent low income housing, literacy programs and legal services centers.

They have worked with Native Americans, migrant farm workers, Americans with disabilities, immigrants, the very young, the very old, and other disadvantaged Americans, to help enable them to become more self-reliant.

Each VISTA volunteer costs the federal government about $8,000, but each VISTA project mobilizes a median of $54,600 in services that otherwise would not have been available. VISTA, in other words, more than pays for itself.

Despite its proven effectiveness in the field, VISTA has never had an easy time in Washington and, most recently, was almost eliminated when it came under attack during President Reagan's first term.

Today, fortunately, VISTA has entered a period of relative stability and enjoys bipartisan support. Even so, VISTA's budget still has not recovered from this difficult period. Today, VISTA is able to support just 2,600 volunteers and about 600 projects across the country. In 1980, by contrast, there were twice as many: 4,208 volunteers serving, with 2,000 projects.

In convening today's hearing, we hope to do more than just celebrate the program's achievements over the last 25 years. We hope to also learn from those achievements. We are fortunate to have with us today a diverse group of outstanding men and women, who have been involved in VISTA as volunteers and administrators at various times since 1964, who will deliver their thoughts on how we can ensure that the lessons we have learned about VISTA and volunteer service over the last quarter of a century can be best put to use today and in the future.

Their counsel comes at a critical time. Over the last year, there has been an enormous resurgence of interest in national volunteer service. But, astonishingly, little attention has been paid to VISTA in this emerging debate. My staff and I long ago gave up on trying to keep track of how many times someone has called for the creation of a domestic peace corps in the last year.

Many believe that VISTA was abolished years ago. Many others seem not to know that it ever existed in the first place. This ignorance of VISTA and failure to draw on the knowledge base they have accumulated during the past 25 years is deeply disturbing, not just for what it might mean for VISTA's future vitality, but what it could mean to the effectiveness of any new volunteer initiatives which may emerge during this Congress.

In this era of decreasing resources, we in the federal government do not have the money to waste on reinventing the wheel. Most importantly, poor people in this country cannot afford to wait for us to try to get it right a second time.

Today's hearing gives us an opportunity to avoid making that mistake. As we look back on VISTA's achievements over the last 25 years, I expect we will learn much which will be useful to us as we plan for VISTA's future.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Major Owens follows:]

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN MAJOR R. OWENS
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE VISTA PROGRAM- 25TH ANNIVERSARY
FEBRUARY 23, 1989

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO COMMEMORATE THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF A GREAT AMERICAN IDEA--THE VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA PROGRAM.

VISTA IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ONLY FULL-TIME DOMESTIC VOLUNTEER SERVICE PROGRAM. FIRST PROPOSED BY PRESIDENT KENNEDY AS A "NATIONAL SERVICE CORPS" WHICH WOULD MOBILIZE AMERICANS TO FIGHT POVERTY HERE AT HOME MUCH AS THE PEACE CORPS FOUGHT POVERTY ABROAD, THE VISTA PROGRAM WAS LATER REVIVED BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON AND INCORPORATED IN HIS WAR ON POVERTY PROPOSALS WHICH WERE ENACTED AS THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1964. VISTAS SERVE FOR ONE YEAR, WORKING FULL-TIME WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NON-PROFIT AGENCIES TO ESTABLISH AND EXPAND PROGRAMS TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY-RELATED PROBLEMS. VISTA VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE A MODEST SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE WHILE IN SERVICE AND ARE EXPECTED TO LIVE AMONG THE SAME LOW-INCOME PEOPLE THEY SERVE.

DURING THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY, OVER 100,000 AMERICANS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, AGES, ECONOMIC LEVELS, AND GEOGRAPHIC AREAS HAVE SERVED AS VISTA VOLUNTEERS. THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE BEEN EXTRAORDINARY. VISTA VOLUNTEERS HAVE HELPED CREATE JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS, HEALTH CLINICS, BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTERS, FOOD PANTRIES, HOMELESS SHELTERS AND PERMANENT LOW-INCOME HOUSING, LITERACY PROGRAMS AND LEGAL SERVICES

CENTERS. THEY HAVE WORKED WITH NATIVE AMERICANS, MIGRANT FARMWORKERS, AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES, IMMIGRANTS, THE VERY YOUNG AND THE VERY OLD, AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED AMERICANS TO HELP ENABLE THEM TO BECOME MORE SELF-RELIANT. EACH VISTA VOLUNTEER COSTS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ABOUT $8,000 BUT EACH VISTA PROJECT MOBILIZES A MEDIAN OF $54,600 IN NEW FUNDS AND SERVICES THAT OTHERWISE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE. VISTA, IN OTHER WORDS, MORE THAN PAYS FOR ITSELF.

DESPITE ITS PROVEN EFFECTIVENESS IN THE FIELD, VISTA HAS NEVER HAD AN EASY TIME IN WASHINGTON AND MOST RECENTLY, WAS ALMOST ELIMINATED WHEN IT CAME UNDER HEAVY ATTACK DURING PRESIDENT REAGAN'S FIRST TERM. TODAY, FORTUNATELY, VISTA HAS ENTERED A PERIOD OF RELATIVE STABILITY AND ENJOYS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT. EVEN SO, VISTA'S BUDGET STILL HAS NOT RECOVERED FROM THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD. TODAY, VISTA IS ABLE TO SUPPORT JUST 2,600 VOLUNTEERS AT ABOUT 600 PROJECTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IN 1980, BY CONTRAST, THERE WERE 4,208 VOLUNTEERS SERVING WITH 2,000 PROJECTS.

IN CONVENING TODAY'S HEARING, WE HOPE TO DO MORE THAN JUST CELEBRATE THE PROGRAM'S ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS; WE HOPE TO ALSO LEARN FROM THEM. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE WITH US TODAY A DIVERSE GROUP OF OUTSTANDING MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH VISTA AS VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AT VARIOUS TIMES SINCE 1964 AND WE WILL BE LOOKING TO THEM FOR THEIR THOUGHTS ON HOW WE CAN ASSURE THAT THE LESSONS THAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT VISTA AND VOLUNTEER SERVICE OVER THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY CAN BE BEST PUT TO USE TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE.

THEIR COUNSEL COMES AT A CRITICAL TIME. OVER THE LAST YEAR THERE HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS RESURGENCE OF INTEREST IN NATIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE BUT, ASTONISHINGLY, LITTLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID TO VISTA IN THIS EMERGING DEBATE. MY STAFF AND I LONG AGO GAVE UP ON TRYING TO KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY TIMES SOMEONE HAS CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF A "DOMESTIC PEACE CORPS" IN THE LAST YEAR. MANY BELIEVE THAT VISTA WAS ABOLISHED YEARS AGO; MANY OTHERS SEEM NOT TO KNOW THAT IT EVER EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THIS IGNORANCE OF VISTA AND FAILURE TO DRAW ON THE KNOWLEDGE BASE WE HAVE ACCUMULATED DURING THE PAST 25 YEARS IS DEEPLY DISTURBING, NOT JUST FOR WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN FOR VISTA'S FUTURE VITALITY, BUT FOR WHAT IT COULD MEAN FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY NEW VOLUNTEER INITIATIVES WHICH MAY EMERGE DURING THIS CONGRESS. SIMPLY PUT, IN THIS ERA OF INCREASINGLY SCARCE RESOURCES, WE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DO NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO WASTE ON REINVENTING THE WHEEL. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, POOR PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY CANNOT AFFORD TO WAIT FOR US TO TRY TO GET IT RIGHT A SECOND TIME.

TODAY'S HEARING GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO AVOID MAKING THAT MISTAKE. AS WE LOOK BACK ON VISTA'S ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE LAST 25 YEARS, I EXPECT THAT WE WILL LEARN MUCH WHICH WILL BE USEFUL TO US AS WE PLAN FOR VISTA'S FUTURE.

Chairman OWENS. I yield to Congressman Bartlett for an opening statement.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have looked forward to this hearing for some time. This is a double-sided hearing, if you will. It is both a good news hearing of an oversight hearing, a celebration of the successes of VISTA for the past 25 years and it is also the opening hearing, if you will, towards the reauthorization of VISTA during this session of Congress.

In a sense, this is a hearing that is first about a celebration in which we think about, talk about and articulate to one another and to the public the positive impacts that VISTA volunteers have had on the lives of Americans around this country, throughout the country, the positive impacts VISTA volunteers have had on millions of individuals, through VISTA volunteers' work in literacy, in drug and alcohol abuse, in working with the homeless and in so many other areas.

VISTA, during the course of that 25 years, has not been without controversy, particularly during the early days, and I think that is probably as it should be. No concept that is worthwhile, as this one is, can be started, I think, and do good things and change the status quo and make improvements in society without some element of controversy in seeking to find just the right set of solutions and approach.

Most of that controversy, it seems to me, is behind us at this point as we look at the next 25 years of VISTA. We have learned, across the system, and we have learned how VISTA volunteers can access the system that is still a grass roots organization, and it seems to me it must remain so.

The goal of VISTA is still to mobilize existing community resources who exist in a community for action to help the lives of people and to instigate and create new sets of resources to bring to bear on lives of people.

This is secondly a reauthorization hearing and, this hearing acknowledges that this year, Congress will—and should, I believe—reauthorize VISTA. In the context of that, I know that the witnesses will also give their considered opinion on the issues before us for the next reauthorization to look forward to the next 25 years.

The witnesses will help us to address the questions of what elements of VISTA are essential that we keep in place and, indeed, even strengthen, and what improvements you would recommend we make for reauthorization.

As we do that, I would hope that the witnesses would comment on how today's VISTA volunteers and tomorrow's VISTA volunteers, in fact, can be made even more increasingly effective in the lives of people who need help in this country. I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

I yield to Mr. Payne for an opening statement.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to be here this morning; unfortunately, I have a conflict and I will have to leave, but hopefully will be able to return.

I would just like to say that, in my opinion, this is one of the most important organizations and programs that we have. We have heard, during the past eight years, that we are in an era of prosperity, that people are doing well, that business is booming and that we have prosperity at home.

Of course, it is all foreign investment, but that is all right. They say it creates jobs. But, as Mario Cuomo very eloquently spoke about, several weeks ago, it is still A Tale of Two Cities. The one that the administration over the past eight years talked about was so nice and sweet and good and positive.

Then, there is that other city where you have a lot of hopelessness and despair. You have a lot of hungry people and homeless. You have disease. You have the need for VISTA people. I think it is one of the most important agencies around.

I not only support reauthorization, but I would hope that we could even expand the amount of funds that this "kinder and gentler" administration will see. It is just a pleasure to be here and I look forward to participating in these hearings.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Payne.

Are there any other members with opening statements? Yes, Mr. Martinez?

Mr. MARTINEZ. This is not exactly an opening statement, but I would like to make a couple of comments. I am looking forward to this hearing for several reasons. One is that I believe, like you, that VISTA has done a great job but maybe not enough of a job.

The problem is, as Mr. Cuomo referred to, two different worlds. There is one world that we live in as we see it from our personal experiences and then, there is another world of reality, of the people who are actually experiencing it and see it.

As I have travelled around the country visiting Job Corps centers and Conservation Corps centers, I have become aware that there is still a lot of unmet need out there. The fact that VISTA is not better known is an indication not of a failure to do a job, but a failure to do a job sufficiently to cover all the need.

There is evidence that there are a lot more needs out there. This is evident in the fact that most of the urban centers have now started what are called local Job Conservation Corps. This, through local government efforts and a lot of private support helps to meet a lot of those unmet needs. In the process, a lot of young people are helped to meet their needs, needs of literacy, job training, job ethics.

I think that there has to be a coming together of all of these programs, to really reach out as far as we possibly can. Those of us that are involved in those particular programs that are having a certain amount of success and like to believe that we are really providing the complete answers to these problems. We are not.

I do not know that they really do believe that completely. I do not even know if they believe they are making sufficient in-roads. But the fact remains that we are not making sufficient in-roads into the problems that do exist out there. We need to provide a greater and a more comprehensive plan.

In that, I am heartened by the fact, as referred to earlier, that the President in his speech spoke of a kinder and gentler America. In a kinder and gentler America, those that have provide for those

that have not—so that those that have not can provide for themselves and become self sufficient and not be a liability, but an asset, to us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Martinez.

Mr. Mfume?

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman, I just briefly want to thank you for convening this hearing. Obviously, most of us here think that it is extremely important.

As you know, I am not a member of this subcommittee, but I have a deep and abiding affection for Volunteers in Service to America and, particularly, the commemoration of their 25th anniversary.

I will be leaving and coming back, if it pleases the Chair, at least. Secretary Brady is appearing before my Banking Committee in about ten minutes, so I am going to try, as best I can, to be in two places at one time for the next couple of hours.

I, like my colleagues, simply want to echo my support for reauthorization and really for expansion of what you refer to in your opening remarks as a great American idea. It is something that all of us in this country can and should feel proud of. I want to commend those who worked so diligently, who will be on all three panels to give testimony this morning.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I simply want to congratulate you for convening us here today for what I consider to be a very important purpose.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Mr. Smith?

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say, as a newcomer to the United States Congress, I come from a small university in Vermont where we, having listened carefully to Father Theodore Hesberg and a number of other leaders, lay and otherwise, in this country, a year and a half ago, began a program at the university directed at the Peace Corps.

There is absolutely no reason why it cannot and should not be extended to VISTA and other kinds of programs. It links the questions of training and preparation and volunteerism and the ability to pay, frankly, for a post secondary education and the inability of many people to pay for a post-secondary education, by establishing something which is analogous to reserve officer training in the upper two years, but saying that you can train, instead of for the military, you can train for service in this country or outside of the country.

You can help pay for your college education and, at the same time, receive the preparation culturally, experientially and intellectually that allows you to be successful. I know in the beginning—my background is experiential education—that there is a problem and there have been problems in many of our applied volunteer programs with burn-out and inadequate preparation.

I have this particular interest of how can they harness the need for people to figure out how to pay for a post-secondary education, the need for this society to become more committed to volunteer service in communities or in the global community and how we can

harness those two things—bring higher education to the table, serve communities, and let your institutions serve students better.

If this panel and other panels were able to have that in the back of their minds as they testify, it is the particular interest that I have that I think takes us beyond the question of reauthorization, quite frankly, to how can we look at what we have learned, build on what we have learned, and make this program even better in the next 25 years.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Jontz?

Mr. JONTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to take just a few seconds to associate myself with your remarks and the remarks of our minority leader in this committee, and to express in advance my appreciation to the witnesses for coming today to share their experience and views.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate your leadership in convening this hearing and drawing our attention to this very important 25th anniversary and the challenges which lie ahead of us. Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

For our first panel on the 25th anniversary of the VISTA Program, I am pleased to welcome a number of veteran participants and administrators. Senator John D. Rockefeller was to be a member of this panel, but he has notified us that he will be arriving a little later.

Judge James Rosenbaum, the U.S. District Court, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Mr. Jeff Newman, the Executive Director, National Child Labor Committee; Ms. Tricia Rubacky; Ms. Molly Burney, PLAN Learning Center, Washington; Ms. Rebecca Betz, Peninsula Literacy Council, Hampton, Virginia; and, Mr. Hyman Bookbinder, who was scheduled for a later panel but has some time problems, so he has been moved to this panel.

I welcome all of you and we will begin with Judge James Rosenbaum.

STATEMENTS OF JUDGE JAMES ROSENBAUM, U.S. DISTRICT COURT, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA; JEFFREY F. NEWMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE; PATRICIA RUBACKY; MOLLY BURNEY; PLAN LEARNING CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.; REBECCA BETZ, PENINSULA LITERACY COUNCIL, HAMPTON, VIRGINIA; AND, HYMAN BOOKBINDER, FORMER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Judge ROSENBAUM. Good morning. I am not very well recovering from a cold.

Thank you, Congressman Owens and thank you, Congressman Bartlett and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear here this morning.

As you heard, my name is James Rosenbaum. I am a United States District Judge and I sit in the State of Minnesota. I was a VISTA volunteer almost twenty years ago from 1969 to 1970 and I served in the City of Chicago.

It was a unique and a most valuable opportunity for me personally, and I want to talk a little about my experiences and a little about some of my observations, if I may be so lucky. First of all, I was right straight out of law school. I was a product of St. Paul public schools and Minnesota University and Law School.

After some of the administrative mess ups, which I have become used to when I went further in my government service, I was placed in the City of Chicago. I was placed at an organization called the Leadership Council.

The name of the organization is actually Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. It was a product of Dr. Martin Luther King's open housing marches in Chicago and in the western suburbs.

For those of us who are a little older than some of my fellow panel members, perhaps the same age as some of the Members of Congress, in that time when the thought of actual integration impinged upon the not only predominantly, but absolutely white neighborhoods surrounding Chicago, very great urban strife broke out.

There was rioting. There were problems. People were hit and hurt by flying objects, a number of problems. At that time, a group was convened which became the Leadership Council. Interestingly, that organization is still there. I believe that last Sunday, as a matter of fact, there was a small piece on them on Sixty Minutes.

That organization was dedicated and worked toward open housing, really on a one-to-one basis, by bringing individual lawsuits on behalf of individuals who had been denied or deprived housing opportunities, either for purchase or for rental.

When I first came there in 1969, I was the first lawyer there, although someone else had been called and there had been successive lawyers, and as many as three or four at a time. That gave me an opportunity to appear in the Federal District Courts of Chicago.

We really did two things: We represented our own clients, but at the same time we, I think to a large extent, educated that same Court about some of the problems. Other individuals have been proceeding in there and have been generally quite successful in their cases.

Like most other VISTAs, I involved myself in other kinds of things besides the regular program which was a part of the VISTA Program. In the housing projects—and I lived in the housing projects in Chicago for a year. For those of you who have visited there, it is an astounding experience.

Chicago's housing projects are in a number of areas around the town. The one that I lived in was the northernmost of a strip of housing projects that ran down State Street along the Dan Ryan Freeway, if you know where it is, from about 22nd and State down to about 55th and State. It is all public housing, top to bottom, north to south.

In the project in which I lived, I set up a legal aid clinic which operated every single Monday night for the time that I was there and then the two years after my VISTA service while I remained in Chicago. With some other friends of mine, we staffed that. In addition, other friends of mine who were accountants set up a program where we did tax preparation.

I can assure you that the poor people enjoyed tax preparation as much as others that you may know, and found it every bit as easy and every bit as complicated, and that program continued at least for three years.

There was, in addition, a group of lawyers, not only VISTAs, but a number of us, who, on a volunteer basis, set up a program to do basically appearances in State Court on weekends and on holidays, because there were no public defender services available weekends and holidays, so people who were picked up for petty misdemeanors but who needed to have a bond set so that they could post a bond for release, these people were not able to get out of prison sometimes for three and four days, depending on the conditions of weekends and holidays.

If a weekend would fall on a holiday, followed by a holiday or preceding it, people would stay there for a long time, so a number of lawyers set that up. I am pleased to say that that program has been permanently adopted and is now part of Chicago's Legal Aid Assistance Program.

The experience for a boy from the north of living in the projects itself is, I really think, more expansive than I could describe in five minutes. It is a real eye opener. It gives you a view of the world that just does not look like it looked back in Highland Park in St. Paul or I suspect most of the places where other people may have come from.

I will tell you that the experience for me was valuable personally. It gave me a chance to learn to be a lawyer. It gave me a chance to do some private work and service for individuals with whom I had a chance to come in contact.

Let me talk for a moment—you have asked that we direct our attention to the possibility of future volunteer service, future VISTA service. Let me also tell you that, as a member of the judicial branch, I do not make policy; that's for you. I cannot tell you what to do, but I can give you my own observations.

First of all, I am not surprised that VISTA is, in some ways, unknown. At least in my experience, VISTA is not really a project or a program by itself. It exists, but it is a placement agency and it puts people in organizations or ongoing entities that themselves need the assistance.

You don't put up a sign and say that this was a VISTA project or this was a VISTA program. What you wind up doing is having a VISTA doing whatever is being done, and the problem there, of course, is the visibility disappears.

I hope that you do encourage and I hope that you do build on the program that exists. VISTA is an opportunity for a number of Americans to have contact with their other and their fellow Americans. It doesn't really matter in some ways what that vehicle is, but this country needs that kind of communication and that kind of contact between those who have or those who are able to help and those that do not have or those that do need the help.

It gave me a chance to see parts of America I didn't know. It gave me a chance to serve and to assist others who might need my help. It gave me a chance to develop myself as a person with them. I did not cure—believe me, as I suspect you knew long before I

came—housing discrimination in Chicago, but I had a chance to help.

I did not resolve their problems, but I had a chance to be part of their solution, at least a small part. I will tell you that it changed my view of this country and my view of future service to it.

I would hope that you would encourage this program. There is a value to helping this country to unite and assist itself, and I thank you, Gentlemen.

If you have any questions, you may feel free; otherwise, I know my other members are similarly informed.

[The prepared statement of Judge James R. Rosenbaum follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. James M. Rosenbaum,
Former VISTA Volunteer.

My name is James M. Rosenbaum, I am a United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota. It is an honor for me to appear before this Committee on the 25th Anniversary on the founding of VISTA. It is both pleasing and disconcerting to realize I was a VISTA volunteer almost 20 years ago. I served from September 1969, through October 1970.

My experiences and my views of VISTA are my own, but they reflect one of the happiest, most frightening, stimulating, humbling, and valuable times of my life. After graduation from the University of Minnesota's Law School in 1969, I was single, age 24, and had only a passing interest in law. I applied for VISTA service prior to graduation indicating my interest in serving on the West Coast, in Alaska, or on one of the Hawaiian or Pacific islands.

Shortly thereafter, having been a lifelong resident of St. Paul, Minnesota, I received notice of assignment to . . . Minneapolis. I was told Minnesota gets cold in the fall. Something clearly had to be done. After screaming at Washington, I was transferred to Chicago, Illinois.

VISTA, at least at that time, was more of a placement agency than an actual service organization. VISTA placed its volunteers into operating service organizations, having no set program of its own. I believe my compensation was $45 per week, but it could have been as much as $60. I can't recall whether I was being paid $240 per month, or $2,400 per year. With this sum of money, plus (I

believe) a $200 initial stipend to establish an apartment, I was to function as a VISTA.

At the time of my service, there were two kinds of VISTA volunteers: those we called "Street VISTAs" and those who were "Professional VISTAs." The difference was primarily that the Street VISTAs did not have advanced degrees and usually performed their service at neighborhood houses, schools, or other community service organizations of that type. The Professional VISTAs performed in their own specialty.

My roommates and I, all three VISTA lawyers, were able to obtain an apartment which had been reserved for us by the Chicago Housing Authority. We lived in an apartment on South State Street, at State and Cermak, in Chicago. To place this apartment in context, it is necessary to understand that Chicago's housing projects are clustered. On State Street that cluster is a ribbon of public housing running from Henry Hilliard Homes on the north (at 22nd and State), to Robert Taylor Homes (located on approximately 53rd or 54th, near the University of Chicago) on the south. This procession of public housing is interrupted only by crossing streets and the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Our buildings were sometimes called "The Poor People's Marina City Towers," because they were built in the same concrete and curvilinear style seen in the Marine City Towers Condominiums and apartments on the north side of the city. Let me assure you that no one would confuse the two. The complex in which I lived consisted of four buildings, two being reserved for older and

physically handicapped people. The other two, in one of which I lived, were some 25 stories high. With eight or nine apartments per floor, the building housed approximately 220 family living units.

There was also reserved a second VISTA apartment housing four Street VISTAs. They primarily assisted in schools as teachers' aides and did social work at the local housing authority offices. In addition, they did some volunteer work with the children in the area.

I was assigned to an organization called the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. That organization was set up following Dr. Martin Luther King's 1968 open housing marches in Chicago and its near suburbs. Those marches resulted in riots and a great civic uproar and helped alert the city's leadership to serious problems and tensions growing out of rigidly segregated housing availabilities. One outgrowth of the disturbances was the creation of the Leadership Council.

By the time I arrived in Chicago, the organization had taken steps to secure the full-time service of one attorney. It had previously utilized volunteer lawyers to bring individual civil rights housing cases in the federal courts of the State of Illinois. The primary legal vehicles were the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (42 U.S.C. §1982) and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §§3601 et seq.)

As a result of my placement, I immediately began handling cases dealing with racial discrimination in the acquisition of

residential housing. At the time the Leadership Council's program began, there was only the two Acts and a U.S. Supreme Court case Jones v. Mayer, 392 U.S. 409, 88 S.Ct 2186 (1968). There were virtually no reported cases dealing with the then new Housing Act.

The organization had requested a VISTA attorney, but had been unable to secure one because of its being relatively small. On the other hand, with my arrival there was one spare VISTA lawyer in Chicago. I wound up at the Leadership Council by a happenstance.

We quickly discovered that the most effective means for determining whether or not discrimination had taken place was to match a minority-group renter or prospective home purchaser with a white person. Each would go to a real estate office or apartment building and seek the same housing. Almost inevitably the white person would be offered either an apartment or property while the black would be denied. Using such a fact situation, we were able to prove discrimination in many cases. The federal courts accepted the concept of testing by use of a minority/white matched pair of prospective housing seekers. To my knowledge, the first time a court acknowledged the validity of this proof was in Martin v. Bowers, 334 F.Supp. 5 (ND Ill. 1971) an early case handled by our office. It has been accepted many, many times since.

It was my own good fortune, that during the course of my year's VISTA service, I personally had the opportunity to handle almost 40 cases on my own in Chicago's federal courts. For a beginning attorney, this is almost unheard of and continued during my two further years at the Leadership Council. In this regard,

my VISTA service was of inestimable value to me and to my future career.

If I can beg the Committee's indulgence, I would be more than remiss if I did not add one other wonderful benefit conferred upon me by my VISTA experience: My beloved wife Marilyn. During 1969, while I was a Vounteer, she was hired as a staff attorney at the Leadership Council. We met as colleagues, she making the enormous sum of $14,000 per year and I a VISTA Volunteer. We became friends and about two years later we were married.

While in VISTA service, and living in Chicago, I did a number of other volunteer activities, purely on my own:

a) After speaking with neighbors and the CHA, I set up a Monday night legal aid clinic in Hilliard Homes. We posted the availability of that clinic and over the year of my VISTA service (and continuing for the two years afterward during which I stayed in Chicago), each Monday night I did legal aid work. I recruited several of my non-VISTA friends who also participated. We did divorce, traffic, debtor-creditor, and a thousand kinds of "fights with city hall." Often it was only to explain, or even to read a simple subscription contract.

b) Through the kindness and help of a number of my other non-VISTA accountant friends, we set up an annual March-April tax clinic to assist in, or prepare, returns for the residents, a number of whom were quite a bit older. As you might expect, living in the projects, very few of the

residents of public housing had substantial assets but they had to file their state and federal taxes, a prospect very daunting to some of these residents.

A number of cases involved rent credit and various tax assisting legislation which could only be utilized if multiple schedules were filed even if the sums were small. I recall in particular one woman who filed a return with about 9 schedules who saved about $75 as a result of hours of work by a CPA who, frankly, became fascinated by the tax code possibilities involved (and which I could never dream of understanding). This clinic continued during the two years after I left VISTA and continued to live in Chicago.

c) In addition to these activities, a group of young lawyers got together to provide volunteer public defender services for indigents who had been arrested on weekends and holidays. The Chicago public defenders office did not provide this service.

In the absence of this service, indigents would be picked up on weekends and holidays and have to remain in the local lock-up until the next court day in order to get a public defender to assist in setting a bond to obtain their release. This resulted in people being arrested for gambling or loitering or a number of public nuisance type crimes and being confined for two days (or perhaps even three if there was a holiday preceding or following a weekend), before they saw a judge to find out that a $10 bond would allow them to get back

on the streets. People with access to funds, of course, had private lawyers come down and simply walk them through the "Holiday Court" process.

A group of about 5 or 10 of us set of a rotating system so that we could be available to meet with, interview, and represent indigents at initial hearings. I recall working on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter as well as regular rotating weekend dates. This program since has been adopted by the Cook County Public Defenders office and is now a permanent part of the services they provide.

d) While in my VISTA service I became increasingly interested in federal appellate litigation. While it actually took place after my VISTA service, I volunteered to undertake volunteer civil appeals and represented three Illinois inmates in a federal case challenging their loss of good time without any due process protections. That case was ultimately successful in United States Ex Rel. Miller v. Twomy, 479 F.2d 701, (7th Cir. 1973). The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals established the principle that a person who had acquired vested good time was entitled to due process protection before it could be forfeit.

My roommates, both VISTA attorneys also, were engaged in similar kinds of activities. One served with the Cook County Legal Assistance Foundation (CCLAF), and the other served in a legal services organization operating out of facilities at the University of Chicago.

On a personal level, and ultimately I think this can be the only was to judge a person's service in an organization like VISTA, I found my service to be one of the most important and valuable experiences I have ever had. My recollection goes over my entire VISTA experience.

One of the things that I most recall is that during the entire time that I lived in this project on Chicago's south side there never passed a day, not a single day, when I did not hear the sound of a basketball being dribbled and a pick-up game being played in the basketball court located behind my building. This would include days when it rained, days when it snowed, days when it was 100°, and days when it went down to 5°. The children or young men would shovel off whatever space was necessary and play under any circumstances. There were summer days when you could hear basketball being played 24 hours a day under the playground lights. Beside the fact that the game is fun, when you have no money you take your entertainment as you find it.

I remember a visit to the apartment of a welfare recipient mother who lived in Ickes Homes, the cluster of buildings immediately south of those in which I lived. She had some kind of legal problem and I visited her in her apartment. At one point for some reason I went into her kitchen, and she opened the cupboards. The only food to feed her family was a 50-pound sack of rice. I have never seen that kind of grinding, overwhelming, poverty. I never knew the reason why.

I never knew the outcome. But it was a window on an existence that I, a middle-class St. Paul boy, had never seen before. I recall, many times, seeing children on tricycles riding back and forth along the covered, fenced but open-to-the-air, hallway outside the family's apartment door. We all lived in a tall building, designed as a high-rise. There was a beautiful play lot way down on the first floor, but any parent who lived above the second or third floor at the farthest, would not let their children out of their sight while preparing meals or taking care of their other children, or attended other responsibilities. The result was that the only place a mother felt safe and comfortable permitting her child to exercise was the hallway going back and forth across the apartment fronts.

The children almost never actually used those play lots. The neighborhood, and this is focusing back in 1969-1970, was beginning to be concerned about gangs. I recall the Vice-Lords and the Black Stone Rangers were located in some of the projects further south. The presence of gangs, and their "turf" marks on the wall, were a matter of enormous concern to the parents in the area. I recall several conversations both in my role as legal clinic attorney and in casual conversations in which the people expressed their grave concerns.

I am sad to say that from my observations as a federal judge, their concerns were well placed and nothing was ultimately

done to stop the oncoming extortion, drug-dealing and miscellaneous vice which seemed to attend the gangs.

Probably the single most valuable experience was a chance to become familiar with fellow citizens who suffer on-going, limitless, hopeless, blinding poverty. There is a tendency to romanticize the poor person struggling either to better themselves to or to make a life on welfare. That romanticism is pure fantasy. There is a hopelessness, a sense of futility, a belief that there is no way out, that suffuses the lives of the residents of the building in which I lived. It is not a matter of sympathy, nor is it a matter for condemnation. It is as much a part of the atmosphere as the air the people breathed.

As a middle-class educated young man from "outside", I saw the way that generations of poverty and a hopeless future saps people's spirits. It was a heart-rending education and a scene and a time I can never forget.

I would like, lastly, to direct my remarks to the future of VISTA and the new emphasis on national service. And let me make clear that I am a member of another branch of the government - I do not speak as an advocate or a policy maker - that is your job are for you as legislators. But let me speak on a personal level.

Nothing I have done in my life, from private practice, to being United States Attorney, to my present position as a U.S. District Judge has brought me closer than VISTA to what I am, and

closer to what I hope this nation may become. My family was never wealthy but we always had enough.

For millions of my fellow citizens "having enough" is an unattainable goal. It is easy - but damaging - to grow up and live in a privileged cocoon, insulated from the realities of a fellow citizen and a brother or sister human being. America is, and must be, more than the vision projected in The Bonfire of the Vanities.

I would never suggest my service cured my neighbor's problems... but it did solve a few. As a result of my service, I didn't save the world ... but I tried to help a few. I didn't ultimately make myself my brother's keeper ... but I did try to lend a hand. This making of contact, the reaching out between a person and their community is, itself, of value. There are vast populations of Americans which many Americans don't know as well as the citizens of other lands. We share a common land and all its joys and problems.

VISTA gave me - and I think still offers - a chance to be a part of my country, a part of my countrymen, and a part of my times. I truly hope that VISTA, or some similar program of service may be able to continue into the future. It is a contribution to America's soul.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Judge Rosenbaum.

We will hold questions until the panel have all finished. I neglected to remind the members of the panel that we have copies of the written statements which will be entered into the record in their entirety without objection, and that there will be a little warning buzzer at seven minutes if you go that far. We apologize for having to constrain you, but you may finish and wind up your thoughts after you hear the bell ring at seven minutes.

Mr. Jeffrey F. Newman.

Mr. NEWMAN. Thank you, Chairman Owens, Congressman Bartlett and other Members of the Committee. It is my very real pleasure to be here this morning on the 25th anniversary of the VISTA Program.

One of the things I was going to say at the very start was that I hoped that this would not be a memorial hearing but instead a celebration and a call to action. I do hope exactly that.

I should tell you that I'm encouraged because in the perhaps half-dozen times that I have been in this room to testify on various subjects ranging from education to youth employment to child labor issues to VISTA today, this is the first time I've seen the Committee chairs fully fulled. I find that encouraging. Maybe it means we are about to enter a kinder and gentler time. I hope so.

I served as a VISTA volunteer along with my wife from March 1966 through January 1968. We trained for a six-week period at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, focusing on community development work with American Indian tribes, and were then assigned to the Menominee Indian Tribe of North Central Wisconsin, where we lived and worked for the duration of our service.

I know I can speak for thousands of former volunteers from the sixties and early seventies and I believe I can speak for tens of thousands of impoverished communities when I say that the VISTA experience at its best—and it often reached its best—filled a series of needs that were not and could not be met in any other way or through any other program. In that sense, I think my service and my wife's were representative, and I'd like to tell you a little bit about it.

First, and not to be passed over lightly, was the VISTA training. It is quite different today from what it was twenty years ago, some 22 years ago. There was a whole training and selection process. Applications were carefully culled and individuals who had a real commitment to service and to working with people were selected.

It was considered important to make certain that VISTA volunteers were not simply individuals looking to find themselves, although many of us did find ourselves in VISTA, or people looking to fill some time. Volunteers, in theory, had to want to make a general commitment to giving at least twelve months of their time to other people.

Someone more versed in the initial design of VISTA than I can tell you how the selection was set up, but the training itself was a remarkable mixture of physical and mental preparation for becoming a VISTA volunteer. It lasted essentially six weeks.

I would venture to say that my six weeks in VISTA training had as much importance and educational value to me as my very good four years at a quality Ivy League college and my two years of

graduate school. It would be hard to over estimate the value of the training, although it must be recognized that all training programs were not on a par with each other.

During our ensuing 21 months as VISTA volunteers in the Menominee Indian community—and it is hard for me to decide whether I should call it Menominee Reservation or Menominee County, because in the days I was there, it was a county in the State of WIsconsin, the Menominee Tribe being one of the two that had experimentally been terminated for a five- year period as a federal tribe and so they were a county.

But during our 21 months, the young people of Neopit, one of the poorest communities in this country and particularly the teenagers, became our life, our family, our love. We found an old, abandoned building with solid structural underpinnings and designated it as the future home of the Neopit Recreation Center.

We put up posters around town and let the word out that on the first Saturday in May, there would be a building clean-up for anyone who wanted to come and help start a rec center. We hoped to have five or six kids come to help. Instead, we got almost two hundred, ranging in age from six to twenty.

The clean-up led to the next week's painting and scraping, the painting and scraping to floor sanding and finishing, then to roofing and, finally, with the help of local merchants, plumbing and rewiring. To turn a fifty-year-old dilapidated building into a strong, safe, modern recreation center that the Menominee kids could be proud of cost a total of $395, mostly for paint, spackle, brushes, sanding equipment and Fabulon.

By July, a recreation center was started. A full- time staff person was hired, paid for out of the considerable proceeds from the newly installed juke box, coke and candy machines and coin pool tables. By September, new furniture was bought, books were purchased, and the Neopit Youth Club was started.

The club was a starting point for special events, like dances, fund-raising activities and social gatherings, an initiator of athletic endeavors, such as a basketball team which travelled the state and a home for previously unavailable services which the young people asked for and needed: tutoring and counseling.

By the end of our first year in Neopit, the young people in the town had a sense of cohesion, a place to go that was theirs and a resource for help in a broad variety of areas. Though statistics were not kept, it was evident to everyone that the crime rate in the area had dropped, the academic achievements increased—especially for the older teenagers attending the local, mostly white, high school—and a sense of community and identity dramatically improved.

In addition to the recreation center and the youth club we, among other activities, instituted a Little League that included two non-Indian communities and two Indian communities; started a golden age club; founded and disseminated a monthly newsletter, which still exists, for the community; purchased with center proceeds a second-hand school bus that took Menominee teenagers to Milwaukee, Green Bay and Shawano for a broad variety of events, cultural and athletic.

Although I cannot tell you which of all the programs and/or achievements still exist today, I can tell you that nine years ago in 1980, when I last visited, more than twelve years after our departure, the recreation center and youth club still exist; the communications system between the school and the tribe was ongoing; the sports team had remained in place; the golden age club and the newsletter was ongoing; the dictionary which we helped start was finalized and still exists today and is used by the tribe; and the relationship between the state university system and the tribe was continuing.

That was a relationship which we started which resulted in the University of Wisconsin bringing onto its various campuses numerous Menominee high school students who otherwise would never have considered or had a chance to go to college.

I do not report all of this to brag about our achievements as VISTA volunteers, although I am proud of those accomplishments and look back on those years with great fondness, but rather to help this committee be reminded of the real successes that are possible when I believe a nation, a government and a people makes a genuine commitment to helping its most disadvantaged in a respectful, self-help oriented way and to help this committee recognize the remarkable low cost of VISTA in the long run and even short run.

I will close my statement by just talking about a couple that I wrote about in my testimony, who I think are equally representative, but they were the other end of the spectrum from my wife and myself.

Wendell and Edna Mae Rush were VISTA volunteers for the Menominee Tribe at the same time as my wife and I. they were assigned to work and live in a slightly more rural area, helping many Menominees who lived out in the nether sections of the Reservation.

They helped the elderly with winterizing their homes, chopping wood, cleaning their yards, developing a medical emergency communications system without phones or electricity and much, much more. When their year as VISTAs ended, they signed up again.

When their second year ended, regulations prevented them from re-upping, so they took their relatively meager life savings and turned themselves into self-supporting volunteers living and working on the reservation for another three years.

Wendell and Edna Mae were 72 and 68 when they started their service. They were also dyed-in-the-wool Goldwater-cum- Reagan Republicans, and they had a chip on their shoulders against a lot of people. For the next five years, almost any day of the year, you could find Wendell chopping wood in front of some elderly man or woman's home; you could find Edna Mae inside talking about flue vaccinations or chili recipes.

When they left Menominee five years later, they were 77 and 73. They were still dyed-in-the-wool Goldwater-cum- Reagan Republicans, but they had no chip on their shoulder and they were beloved by hundreds of Menominee men, women and children. If Wendell and Edna Mae are alive today, I know they are content because of those five years and the people they served will never forget them.

To me, in a very real way, they represent our nation's humanity. Give it a chance to bloom with VISTA-like programs and it spreads its seed within and without. Keep it locked up, as we have done so often in recent years, and it festers so that all of us develop chips on our shoulders that breed mistrust and hatred.

Today, I believe, the Wendells and Edna Maes are just waiting to be invited to serve, and the disadvantaged are in need.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Jeffrey F. Newman follows:]

TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY F. NEWMAN BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION OF THE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

FEBRUARY 23, 1989

Chairman Owens, other members of the Committee, it is my very real pleasure to testify before you today on this the 25th anniversary of the VISTA program.

I served as a VISTA Volunteer along with my wife from March, 1966 through January, 1968. We trained for a six week period at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, focusing on community development work with American Indian tribes, and were then assigned to the Menominee Indian Tribe of North Central Wisconsin, where we lived and worked for the duration of our service.

I know I can speak for thousands of former Volunteers from the sixties and early seventies, and I believe I can speak for tens of thousands of impoversihed communities when I say that the VISTA experience at its best -- and it often reached its best -- filled a series of needs that were not and could not be met in any other way or through any other program. In that sense I think my service and my wife's were representative and I'd like to tell you a bit about it.

First, and not to be passed over lightly in importance, was the VISTA selection and training process at that time. Applications were carefully culled to try and find individuals

who had a real commitment to service and to working with people. It was considered important to make certain that VISTA Volunteers were not simply individuals looking to find themselves -- although many of us did find ourselves in VISTA -- or people looking to fill some time. Volunteers, in theory, had to want to make a genuine commitment to giving at least twelve months worth of their time to other people.

Someone more versed in the initial design of VISTA can tell you how selection was set up, but from the applicant's point of view it was a fairly demanding system, including a lengthy application and a test. Moreover, the selection process continued assiduously throughout the extensive training program. For example, of the 29 individuals selected and assigned to our training program, 8 were, in the words of the day, de-selected before the six weeks were up. The reasons for de-selection varied greatly but suffice to say that at least two fellow trainees de-selected themselves, two others were caught smoking pot and four left by mutual agreement without being given assignments at the training's conclusion.

The training itself was a remarkable mixture of physical and mental preparation for becoming a VISTA Volunteer. Each lasted approximately six weeks, and included a two week trial assignment. In our case, we worked with families on the Wind River Arapaho and Shoshone Reservation in Wyoming and met regularly with our supervisors. But, VISTAs planning to work in urban areas had similar preliminary assignments, which enabled budding volunteers to assess situations, problems,

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issues for themselves, and then to learn from experienced supervisors how to cope.

I would venture that my six weeks in VISTA training had as much importance and educational value to me as my very good four years at a quality Ivy League college and my two years of graduate school. It would be hard to overestimate the value of the training, although it must be recognized that all training programs, from what we then understood, were not on a par with each other.

Towards the end of training, supervisors and trainees together openly discussed individual strengths, talents and weaknesses. The staff presented a list of possible assignments with job descriptions that were available, and asked if there were any strong preferences. They then went about making assignments, wherever appropriate and possible sending volunteers off to where they wished to go. We were then to be paid approximately $60/week each subsistence allowance, and $50 a month was to be set aside for us to be paid upon our leaving VISTA.

Because my wife and I were a married couple we, along with the one other married couple in the group, got pretty much our choice of assignments. This was because communities and community action programs seeking VISTA Volunteers almost almost indicated a preference for married couples: they tended to be less of a problem socially, and to fit in better with the community to which they were to be assigned.

We were assigned to the Tribal Community Action Program of the Menominee Tribe, which was then under the direction of a

very dynamic and well-known Catholic priest. He asked us to move into a small one-bedroom house in the Menominee community of Neopit, Wisconsin, (a 1500 person mill town roughly 50 miles northwest of Green Bay) and to work towards the establishment of a recreation center and youth club for the young people of the town.

During the ensuing twenty-one months, the young people of Neopit, in particular the teenagers of Neopit, became our life, our family, our love. We found an old abandonned building with solid structural underpinnings and designated it as the future home of the Neopit Recreation Center. We put up posters around town, and let the word out that on the first Saturday in May there would be a building clean-up for anyone who wanted to come and help start a rec center.

We hoped to have five or six kids come to help. Instead, we got almost 200, ranging in ages from 6 to 20. The clean-up led to the next week's painting and scraping: the painting and scraping to floor sanding and finishing: then to roofing: and, finally, with the help of local merchants, plumbing and rewiring. To turn a fifty year-old dilapidated building into a strong, safe, modern recreation center that the Menominee kids could be proud of cost a total of $395., mostly for paint, spackle, brushes, sanding equipment and Fabulon.

By July, a recreation center was started. A full-time staff person was hired, paid for out of the considerable proceeds from the newly installed juke box, coke and candy machine and coin pool tables. By September, new furniture was bought,

books were purchased and a Neopit Youth Club was started. The Club was a starting point for special events, like dances, fund-raising activities and social gatherings, an initiator of athletic endeavors, such as a basketball team which travelled the state, and a home for previously unavailable services which the young people asked for and needed: tutoring and counseling.

By the end of our first year in Neopit, the young people of the town had a sense of cohesion, a place to go that was theirs and a resource for help in a broad variety of areas. Though statistics were not kept, it was evident to everyone that the crime rate in the area dropped, the academic achievements increased, especially for the older teenagers attending the local high school and the sense of community and identity dramatically improved.

In addition to the recreation center and the youth club, we, among many other activities, initiated a Little League, that included two non-Indian communities and two Indian communities; started a golden age club with a transportation system that enabled the elderly to meet at least twice a week; founded and disseminated a monthly newsletter for the community; purchased with center proceeds a second-hand school bus that took Menominee teenagers to events in Milwaukee (200 miles away), Green Bay and nearby Shawano, and that gave them mobility for visits to Upward Bound programs, college visits, etc; established a required two-way communication system between the public high school in Shawano and the tribe for kids facing difficulties in school. created a formal relationship for the

first time between the Tribe and the University of Wisconsin (at the end of our first year in Neopit, 11 of the 26 graduating Indian students went on to college, a four-fold increase over any previous year); helped create a dictionary of the Menominee language along with two other VISTA Volunteers.

Although I cannot tell you which of these programs and/or achievements still exist today I can tell you that as of 1980, more than twelve years after our departure, the recreation center and youth club still existed; the communication system between school and Tribe was ongoing; the sports teams remained in place; the golden age club and the newsletter were ongoing; the dictionary was finalized and exists; and the relationship between the state University system and the Tribe was continuing.

I do not report all of this to brag about our achievements as VISTA Volunteers, although I am proud of those accomplishments and look back on those years with great fondness, but rather to help this Committee be reminded of the real successes that are possible when a nation, a government, a people makes a genuine commitment to helping its most disadvantaged in a respectful, self-help oriented way, and to help this Committee recognize the remarkable low cost of VISTA in the long and even shortrun.

It may be hard to imagine in these days of "thirtysomething" that idealism doesn't just mean part-time community service after work hours at Paine Weber; but the fact is there is a wealth of enthusiasm among Americans of every

age, every color and every economic class for giving a real part of themselves over to others. Of equal importance, government's commitment to the VISTA concept of old was a symbolic commitment of the nation to its poor, and it triggered the very best in many Americans, and made them feel they were doing their duty for their country in just as important and meaningful a sense as military service.

Wendell and Edna Mae Rush were VISTA Volunteers for the Menominee Tribe at the same time as my wife and I. They were assigned to work and live in a slightly more rural area, helping many Menominees who lived out in the nether sections of the Reservation. They helped the elderly with winterizing their homes, chopping wood, cleaning their yards, developing a medical emergency communications system without phones or electricity and much, much more. When their year as VISTAs ended they signed up again. When their second year ended, regulations prevented them from re-upping, so they took their relatively meager life savings and turned themselves into self-supporting volunteers, living and working on the Reservation for another three years.

Wendell and Edna Mae were 72 and 68 respectively when they started their service. They were also dyed-in-the-wool Goldwater-cum-Reagan Republicans; and they had a chip on their shoulder against a lot of people. For the next five years, almost any day of the year you could find Wendell chopping wood in front of some elderly man or woman's home; and you could find Edna Mae inside talking about flu vaccinations or chili recipies. When they left Menominee five years later they were

77 and 73: they were still dyed-in-the-wool Goldwater-cum-Reagan Republicans; but they had no chip on their shoulder and they were beloved by hundreds of Menominee men, women and children. If Wendell and Edna Mae are alive today I know they are content because of those five years, and the people they served will never forget them.

To me, in a very real way, Wendell and Edna Mae represent our nation's humanity; give it a chance to bloom with VISTA-like programs and it spreads its seed within and without. Keep it locked up, and it festers so that all of us develop chips on our shoulders that breed mistrust and hatred. Today, I believe, the Wendells and Edna Maes are just waiting to be invited to serve, and the disadvantaged are in need.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Tricia Rubacky.

Ms. RUBACKY. My name is Patricia Rubacky. Thank you for inviting me to come today to tell you about my VISTA service and about the VISTA program.

I would first like to say that my experience in VISTA humbled me very much by exposing me to poverty. It challenged me by forcing me to find ways not just to help people but to help them help themselves. It taught me about myself by exposing my own ignorance and my impatience.

It angered me very much by bringing me face to face with the persistence of poverty and it motivated me to shape my life and my work, to find ways to rid this country of the indignity of poverty.

As a college senior at Rutgers University in New Jersey, I had searched for new ways of understanding poverty beyond what I could get from books and professors. A VISTA/Peace Corps recruiter came to my campus, and suggested that I join VISTA.

After talking to VISTA program staff and learning about actions for placement, a VISTA supervisor named Oeita Bottorff, from the Greater Dallas Community of Churches, called me and told me about Block Partnership, a program in the Chicano and poor communities of Dallas.

Despite my fear of what might lie ahead, I decided to move to Dallas. I did so right after my graduation from college in 1977. It was an experience I will never forget.

I was one of twelve community organizers placed with the Block Partnership Program. The concept was to match church congregations with communities in need of improvement in housing, education and recreation.

My job was to find and develop community leadership and to help those leaders find solutions to community problems. In my training, which again was very sufficient, I was reminded of the program's motto: "If you feed a hungry man a fish for a day, he will eat for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for the rest of his life."

I would like to tell you about one experience I had in Dallas in the community that actually looked rather rural and urban to me. It was in West Dallas. It had unpaved streets, open sewers and very small, dilapidated houses. Most of the people who lived there were poor white or Chicano and many, surprisingly, were rather sick.

There were many problems, but I immediately noticed a very pervasive odor in the community. I asked the residents about it. It was clearly a priority to them. They said nothing could be done. I soon learned that the odor was called by a rendering plant which processed the parts of dead animals, and the company would do nothing to control the odor.

To many people, what was worse was the company's practice of driving open trucks through their neighborhood on the way to the plants. The streets were strewn with animal parts, which regularly fell off those trucks. It was not only a very disgusting thing, but a serious health hazard to that community.

Being from Washington, D.C., I had never lived near heavy or light industry, even, but I really knew there was a problem there. I

recognized some leadership qualities in the men and women in that community and in just a few weeks, I helped these people learn their way through the environmental protection ordinances of the city to convince the city government to take readings of the emissions from the plant, to monitor the truck droppings by taking photographs, and to draw media attention to this problem.

I am happy to say that within four months, the city had cited that plant for lack of compliance and forced them to regulate their emissions, secure and reroute their trucks.

The people could not quite believe that after twenty years of this problem, a putrid odor was gone, the trucks and animal parts were gone, and they really began to believe in their own ability to take control over their lives and improve their community.

Before I left that community, a congregation interested in being partners with the West Dallas group worked with them to clean up several vacant lots, abandoned buildings, to track down absentee landlords and improve the housing and to petition the city for sidewalks and sewers.

I also helped other VISTAs on my project organize two congregation-based programs, "Adopt-a-School" and "Adopt-a-Home", which matched congregations where the schools and housing were in need.

Perhaps, Mr. Bartlett, you are familiar with the programs that I am telling you about, because they still exist and are still successful after twelve years in the Dallas community.

I am very sure, as I sit here today, that my VISTA position was the hardest, most challenging job I have ever had. I am sure that I learned more in that time than I did in my entire four years of college. I am also sure that my VISTA position put me on the career track that I have pursued for the future.

When I left Dallas in 1978, I returned to Washington. I have, for the last twelve years, trained VISTAs throughout the United States, under training grants from the National Center on Urban Ethnic Affairs and through the Youth Project.

I also worked for the VISTA Program for the fifteenth anniversary organizing recognition events around the country for VISTA volunteers. I spent seven months working at the Youth Project, a national public foundation, which had the VISTA volunteers for many years and stayed there until 1987. I left to pursue my current work as a fundraising trainer for a variety of anti-poverty and social justice organizations.

After being a part of the 15th, the 20th and now the 25th anniversary of VISTA, I believe that it is cause for celebration that VISTA is still around, but it is time for renewal and revitalization of the VISTA Program.

I believe that the VISTA Program for the last several years has been undervalued, neglected, beaten and battered. It is a mere shadow of its former self with half as many volunteers in the program as served when I was in service in 1977.

To give you an example, in 1987, ten years after I served, my younger brother, Christopher, tried to join VISTA after his graduation from Emory University. They were no VISTA recruiters on his campus and he could not get any information, even an application.

He was told he had to find a local project somewhere in the country who sponsored VISTA to see if they needed anyone. After numerous calls and letters, he finally found a placement in California and, after going there at his own expense, he found the project no longer existed.

He did feel exploited and did not stay and ended up working at COOL, a campus outreach project, and we are going to tell you a little bit more about that today.

It is my pleasure to be here today. I would like to encourage you to give people like my brother, Christopher, and other people in this country of all ages who want an opportunity, to volunteer, that opportunity by extending the VISTA Program.

I do not think VISTA is the cure for poverty, but I think it can make a difference. VISTA works, not just for volunteers, but for those who they serve, and I encourage your support for a revitalized VISTA.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Patricia Rubacky follows:]

TESTIMONY OF TRICIA RUBACKY
TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF VISTA
FEBRUARY 23, 1989

Good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about the VISTA Program and my VISTA service. My name is Tricia Rubacky and Washington, DC is my hometown. Over the last twelve years VISTA has been a part of my life, and has taken me across the country to experience many things -- some that make me proud and others that make me ashamed. My experience as a volunteer **humbled me** by exposing me to poverty and the poor. It **challenged me** by forcing me to find ways not just to help people, but ways they could help themselves. It **taught me** about myself by exposing my own ignorance and impatience. It angered me by bringing me face to face with the persistence of poverty. And it **motivated me** to shape my life and my career to work in quiet yet effective ways to rid our country of the indignity and injustice of poverty.

Immediately upon my graduation from college, I served in the VISTA program in the Chicano barrios and neglected poor communities of Dallas, Texas. As a college senior majoring in American Studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, I had searched for new ways of understanding poverty and finding solutions, but not from books and professors. A VISTA/PEACE

CORPS recruiter came to my campus, and suggested that I join VISTA. I was afraid, but at the same time I was compelled to do something about the poverty I knew existed, somehow, alongside the comforts and wealth of the rest of the country.

The VISTA program staff informed me about options for my placement, and had the site supervisors call me to see if there was a match for me with the projects. I spoke to a woman named Oeita Bottorff, who told me about the Greater Dallas Community of Churches (GDCC) and her program, Block Partnership. Despite my fear of the unknown, I moved to Dallas right after my graduation from college in June, 1977. It was an experience I will never forget.

I was one of twelve volunteers placed as community organizers with the Block Partnership Program of the GDCC. Some, like me, were nationally recruited volunteers, while others were local recruits from the Dallas area. The concept of the Block Partnership Program was to match local congregations with communities in need of improvements in housing, education, recreation, etc. My job was to help develop community leadership, and help those leaders find solutions to community problems. In my training I was reminded of the program motto: "If you feed a hungry man a fish he will eat for a day; but if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for the rest of his life".

My first assignment was in a community in West Dallas, an area that looked more rural to me with its unpaved streets, open sewers, and small, dilapidated houses. Most of the people who lived there were white or Chicano, and poor, and many were sick. I immediately noticed a pervasive and putrid odor throughout the community. When I asked about it residents said they were angry, but that nothing could be done about it. The odor was caused by a rendering plant which processed the parts of dead animals, and the company would not do anything to control the odor. To many people, what was worse was the company's practice of driving open trucks through their neighborhood on the way to the plants. It was an ugly scene and a health hazard for sure to have the streets strewn with animal parts which regularly fell off the trucks.

I had never lived near heavy or even light industry, and I was regularly sickened by going to this neighborhood. But I recognized leadership qualities in many men and women there who wanted to force the company to respond to the residents' complaints. Over the course of just a few weeks, I helped these people learn their way through the environmental protection ordinances of the city, convince the city government to take readings of the emissions, monitor the truck droppings by taking photographs, and use what they had learned to attract media attention to the problems. Within four months, the city had cited the plant for lack of compliance and forced them to

regulate the emissions, and secure and reroute their trucks. The putrid odor was gone, the trucks and animal parts were gone, and the people began to believe in their ability to take control over their lives and improve their community.

Before I left, I found a congregation interested in being "partners" with the West Dallas group, and worked with them to clean up several vacant lots, track down absentee landlords to improve the housing, petition the city for sidewalks and sewers, and start a recreation program in an abandoned building they converted into a community center.

As part of my VISTA service, I also helped the Dallas County Juvenile Department establish a volunteer recruitment and training component for Volunteers in Probation, a program that matched first offender juveniles with a "big brother" or "big sister", as a means of reducing the incidence of repeat offenders among juveniles. I also helped other VISTAS on my project organize two congregation-based programs: "Adopt-a-School" and "Adopt-a-Home" to match volunteers from the congregations with local schools in need of assistance, and with low-income home owners who needed help fixing up their homes. All these programs proved very successful and still continue twelve years later.

I am sure that my VISTA position was the hardest, most challenging job I had ever had. I am sure that I learned more in

that time than I did in my entire four years in college. I am also sure that my VISTA experience put me on the career track I have pursued and to which I am dedicated for the future. My VISTA experience helped me to develop the skills I use today as a trainer, a fundraiser, and a manager. And I am still very close to Oeita, who inspired me, kept me up when I was down, and gave me her friendship.

I completed my year of service, and after helping Oeita to select and train a new team of VISTAS, I left Dallas in August, 1978, and moved back to Washington, DC. I was hired to train VISTAs in community-based programs throughout the United States under a VISTA training grant through the National Center on Urban Ethnic Affairs. In 1980 I went to work for VISTA, organizing recognition events for volunteers around the country for the 15th Anniversary. Soon after, I was hired by The Youth Project, a national public foundation which supports grassroots organizations, to direct their VISTA program placing and training VISTAS in 25 different local projects around the country. I later became the Fundraising Director for The Youth Project, and stayed there through 1987 when I left to pursue my current work as a fundraising trainer and consultant to a range of anti-poverty, peace and justice, and environmental organizations around the country.

For the last six years I have also been a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of VISTA, a small non-profit organization which has been instrumental in fighting to protect and preserve the VISTA program. I have been a part of the 15th, the 20th, and now the 25th Anniversary of VISTA -- and believe it is cause for celebration that VISTA is still around to have another anniversary. Yet at the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of VISTA, I feel that it is time to renew support for VISTA -- which, over the last several years, has been undervalued, underfunded, neglected, beaten and battered. VISTA is now a mere shadow of its former self with half as many volunteers in the program as served when I did in 1977.

In 1987, ten years after I had served, my younger brother, Christopher tried to join VISTA after his graduation from Emory University. There were no VISTA recruiters on campus, no counselors who knew anything about VISTA. He received no encouragement, no application, and could learn nothing about opportunities to join. Even with the help of people I knew in the agency, it was a struggle to find a position. Chris was told he had to find a local project which sponsored VISTAs and see if they needed anyone. After numerous long-distance phone calls and letters, he finally found a placement in California, flew there at his own expense, only to find the position he applied for no longer existed and that he would be sent elsewhere in the state.

There was no orientation, no training, and the word VISTA was virtually non-existent. He felt exploited and did not stay, choosing instead to return the east coast for a internship sponsored by COOL, a campus-based youth outreach organization.

I believe that on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary, it is appropriate and not too late to put VISTA back on the map, fund it adequately, advertise it, name someone who is proud of it to run it. In response to the rekindled interest in national service, Congress has an opportunity to expand and revitalize VISTA, a proven and viable model for national voluntary service. Through VISTA, we can recruit people of all ages who want to volunteer to help bring an end to poverty, hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, and other human suffering we can no longer ignore in America.

25 years after VISTA was founded, poverty persists in America. VISTA is not the cure for poverty. But it has and still can make a difference. VISTA works, not just for volunteers, but for those they serve. I encourage your support for a revitalized VISTA.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Ms. Molly Burney.

Ms. BURNEY. Good morning, Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Molly Burney. I am a VISTA volunteer with the community-based adult literacy program called PLAN. PLAN is located here in Washington, D.C.

I started in literacy classes at PLAN in 1984 and am now in a GED class. I was also on PLAN's board of directors from 1985 to 1987. Two years ago, I was asked to be a VISTA volunteer in PLAN's Take Up Reading Now program.

Take Up Reading Now is a program for low literate parents. I am a parent and a grandparent myself who has struggled with reading. Therefore, I know how to talk to and work with those parents.

There are three VISTA volunteers at PLAN. We give out learning kits and do workshops with low-income, low- literate parents at clinics and neighborhood centers.

The kits include baby books and toys, and we show the parents how they can use the kits at home with their children. Some of the parents that we worked with have since joined PLAN for literacy classes.

We also conduct workshops for low-literate parents who cannot read or understand their children's report cards. At PLAN, we took what we learned and turned it into a training kit for libraries and professionals who work with parents. More than 200 programs have ordered our kit.

As a VISTA volunteer, my fellow workers and I also have been speakers at literacy conferences and have been on several TV and radio programs. I am also one of the three parents in a WQED project, PLUS Video, that is now being sent out to PBS stations nationwide.

I am also a member of the U.S./U.K. Literacy Exchange that met at Lehman College in New York City this past summer. I will be going to a second conference in London this summer. All of these activities have helped me improve my reading and speaking skills and my self-confidence.

Since I have been a VISTA volunteer, I have had many opportunities to talk with parents in my neighborhood and to give them the encouragement that I needed, but never got, as a literate parent. I have been able to reach out and work with professionals who themselves work with the families.

At the same time, I have learned workplace and community organizing skills. My VISTA experience has led me into new opportunities.

I am now attending classes for early child development. I am working towards my certificate that will permit me to be a teacher's aide.

In my opinion, VISTA is a valuable, valuable program and needs to be continued.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Molly Burney follows:]

Push Literacy Action Now

TESTIMONY OF VISTA VOLUNTEER MOLLIE BURNEY

Good morning members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mollie Burney. I am a Vista volunteer with the community based adult literacy program called PLAN. PLAN is located here in Washington, D.C.

I started in literacy classes at PLAN in 1984 and am now in a GED class. I was also on PLAN's board of directors from 1985 to 1987. Two years ago I was invited to become a Vista volunteer in PLAN's Take Up Reading Now program. Take Up Reading Now is a program for low-literate parents. I am a parent and a grandparent myself who has struggled with reading. Therefore I know how to talk to and work with those parents.

There are three Vista volunteers at PLAN. We give out learning kits and do workshops with low-income, low-literate parents at clinics and neighborhood centers. The kits include baby books and toys, and we show the parents how they can use the kits at home with their children. Some of the parents that we worked with have since joined PLAN for literacy classes.

We also conduct workshops for low-literate parents who can't read or don't understand their children's report cards. At PLAN we took what we learned from working with low-literate parents and turned it into a training kit for other literacy programs, libraries and professionals who work with parents. More than 200 programs have ordered our kit.

As Vista volunteers, my fellow workers and I have also been speakers at literacy conferences and have been on several TV and radio programs. I am also one of three parents in a video called "Parenting Strategies for Accessing Schools" that is being distributed by the PLUS Literacy Project.

I am also a member of the United States/British Literacy Exchange which met at Lehman College in New York City this past summer. I will be going to a second conference in London. All of these activities have helped me improve my reading and speaking skills and my self-confidence.

Since I have been a Vista volunteer I have had many opportunities to talk with parents in my community to give them the encouragement that I needed, but never got, as a low-literate parent. I have been able to reach out and work with professionals who themselves work with families. At the same time, I have learned workplace and community organizing skills. My Vista experience is leading me into new opportunities. I now attend training classes in early childhood development. I am working towards a certificate that will permit me to be a teacher's aide.

In my opinion, Vista is a valuable program and should be continued. Thank you very much.

1332 G Street SE • Washington DC 20003 • (202) 547-8903

Chairman OWENS. Thank you.

Ms. Becky Betz.

Ms. BETZ. Good morning, Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee.

My name is Becky Betz and I am a VISTA volunteer with the Peninsula Literacy Council in Hampton, Virginia. I drove up to Washington last night and spent the night with some friends in Rockville that I had gone to high school with.

When I told them what I was doing and why I was in Washington, they said, "You are a VISTA volunteer. Isn't that something you are supposed to do when you are right out of college?" I said, "No, I like to think of myself as a late bloomer and hope I can do some of my best work in a second career."

I came to VISTA not through an interest particularly in being a VISTA volunteer, but through doing volunteer literacy work with the Peninsula Literacy Council in Hampton. Through my professional work, I had been developing a strong interest in adult education.

I was also pursuing that interest on a volunteer basis by working with a 52-year-old man and teaching him how to read. Being a literacy volunteer not only heightened my interest in adult education, it also opened my eyes to a world of need for adult literacy training in my own community of Hampton and Newport News, Virginia.

I was frankly ignorant of the scope of illiteracy in my own community on the Virginia Peninsula. There are about a quarter-million people who live in Hampton and Newport News and York County in that section of Virginia. Conservative estimates are that about 16 percent of the adult population of that community have literacy-related problems.

Our volunteer organization, the Peninsula Literacy Council, is currently tutoring 265 adults. Other programs at public libraries and jails and through juvenile and probation programs are tutoring about another hundred people, so that's 365, a very large population. We are not exactly making a big impact, but doing the best we can to solve a community problem.

My awareness of the importance of volunteer literacy efforts came from direct experience of working with my student. As he progressed in his reading and writing ability, I began to see for myself the impact of volunteers in helping to solve community problems.

As a new literacy tutor without a background in education, I had been frankly skeptical of whether the 12-hour workshop I took to train me to be a literacy tutor would turn me into a reading teacher.

My student, a very hard working and motivating person, deserves a lot of the credit for bolstering my confidence in volunteer tutoring. I have become a firm believer that trained tutors working one-on-one with students can play an important role in improving literacy in their own communities.

The flexibility, creativity and special attention that volunteers bring to the task of tutoring make literacy tutoring a working partnership between the student and the tutor.

The unique resources and abilities that each student brings to tutoring also makes learning a true partnership. Frankly, it was the hard work, interest and motivation of my student that got me hooked on volunteer literacy work.

When I learned of the opportunity to be a VISTA volunteer working for the Literacy Council, I had frankly not heard of VISTA for many years and was unaware that it was still operating, in fact, and this was just last fall.

The Peninsula Literacy Council has utilized VISTA volunteers to develop new programs for volunteers and to work in specific neighborhoods with needs for local literacy programs. Full-time volunteers are a real boon to any low- budget volunteer organization.

With the Literacy Council serving a very diverse population in a spread out geographic area that ranges from rural to urban neighborhoods, VISTA volunteers have been able to play a very important role in getting the Council's programs out of the office and into neighborhoods to the people who need them.

I was recently hired, and I wish I could sit here and tell you of the great results that I have achieved as a VISTA volunteer. I have only been on the job for a few weeks. My role and the goal for my service as a VISTA is to help the Literacy Council develop an intergenerational literacy program on the Peninsula.

The goal of the program is to specifically serve the literacy needs of parents of young children, not unlike the program that Molly talked about that PLAN operates in Washington, D.C. We do not currently have that kind of specific program on the Peninsula, and we would like to implement one down there.

It is an ambitious goal and we have gotten a good start on getting the program underway. We have been developing goals and objectives, surveying similar goals in other communities, identifying community resources that can be brought into the program and developing partnerships with other community agencies that can help us with the program.

Fundraising has also been an important part of my job. As a former employee of a large corporation in the community, I have a lot of business contacts that my executive director is happy to exploit.

So that has been a very important part of my job, to raise the money to get the program off the ground that we want to initiate and set some things in place that will continue beyond my VISTA service.

I have frankly been impressed, in the few weeks that I have been on the job, with the willingness of community organizations, groups and individuals, to support and respond to our requests for help with literacy efforts.

I think what it often takes in a community is the person who has the time and the energy to go out and ask for help, and that is where I see VISTA people having a very important role, particularly in literacy efforts.

I have not encountered anybody who has said, "No, we don't want to do anything to help the literacy effort." It is just a matter of having a person who can go out and call on people, raise money and solicit assistance from groups and individuals to get something off the ground.

I have been really pleased with the community response in my area to setting up a new program. The scope of the program that we will implement will, of course, depend upon the results of our fundraising efforts and some other collaborative efforts that are currently underway.

In addition to working on setting up this new program, I have also become very involved in the day-to-day workings of the literacy council and gained a much greater understanding of how volunteer organizations work and get things done.

I have also been training to become a tutor trainer, to train other tutors, which is work that I can continue on a volunteer basis beyond my VISTA service.

You have asked us to comment about future VISTA opportunities. When Jeff Newman mentioned training, I think my experience as a VISTA is much different from what people who were VISTAs fifteen or twenty years ago probably went through.

My training was a day and a half of orientation on sort of how you get paid, some nuts and bolts of being a VISTA employee, and then was expected to hit the floor running, so to speak, as far as working for the Literacy Council and developing a new program. There was no training.

I think this plays up an important difference between what VISTA is now and what it was twenty years ago. I am not fresh out of college. Hopefully, I did not need a whole lot of training to do some of the things that I am currently doing on the job.

I think there is a great potential for getting people who have some experience, local people from within the community who have an interest in doing volunteer service and who have some skills and resources from within that community, and pulling them into a VISTA program.

I also think there is a very important place for young people with lots of energy, but I think that the response of my friends and former colleagues, are among people who would like an opportunity to become involved in VISTA if they knew more about it and if it were more highly publicized.

It is still out there as an opportunity to do service within the community. I think that is important.

[The prepared statement of Rebecca Betz follows:]

Becky Betz, VISTA
Peninsula Literacy Council
Feb. 16, 1989

A career change at age 38 is not easily undertaken. I needed a push in the right direction to leave the comfort and security of my former position with a large corporation. For me, that push was the opportunity to be a VISTA and work for the Peninsula Literacy Council.

I had been considering a career change for some time when I became a volunteer literacy tutor over a year ago. Training had become an increasingly important part of my job. Working for a growing business in a tight labor market made training and development a significant part of my job as an accountant. At work I was training adults to use computers, develop supervisory skills and communicate effectively with customers and coworkers. As a volunteer literacy tutor, I was helping an adult to improve his reading and writing skills. Both experiences were exciting and rewarding for me. By necessity and by choice I was developing a strong interest in adult education and training.

Being a literacy volunteer not only heightened my interest in adult education, it also opened my eyes to a world of need for basic adult literacy training in my own community. I was frankly ignorant of the scope of illiteracy and related needs on the Virginia Peninsula. There are approximately 250,000 people living in Hampton, Newport News, and York County. A conservative estimate is that 16 per cent of the adult population of this area has literacy-related problems. The Peninsula Literacy Council is currently tutoring 265 of these people. Other volunteer literacy programs in public libraries and jails reach approximately 100 more people. Though volunteer organizations are not the only source of help, it doesn't take much figuring to see that there is a severe shortfall in meeting the literacy needs of this community.

My awareness of the importance of volunteer literacy efforts came from direct experience with my student. As he progressed in reading and writing ability, I began to see the impact of volunteers in helping to solve community problems. As a new literacy tutor without a background in education, I had been skeptical of whether a 12 hour workshop was sufficient training to turn me into an effective reading teacher. My student, a hard working and very motivated person, deserves a lot of credit for bolstering my confidence in volunteer tutoring. I have become a firm believer that trained tutors working one-on-one with students can play an important role in improving literacy in their own communities. The flexibility, creativity, and special attention that volunteers bring to the task make literacy tutoring a working partnership between student and tutor. The unique resources and abilities that each student brings to tutoring also makes learning a true partnership. Frankly, it was the hard work, interest, and motivation of my student that got me hooked on volunteer literacy work.

When I learned of the opportunity to be a VISTA working for the Literacy Council, I had not heard of VISTA for many years and I was unaware that it was still operating. The Peninsula Literacy Council has utilized VISTA volunteers to develop new programs for volunteers and to work in specific neighborhoods with needs for local literacy programs.

The Literacy Council serves a diverse population in a geographic area that ranges from rural to urban neighborhoods. VISTA volunteers have played an important role in getting the Council's programs out of the office and into the neighborhoods.

My role as a VISTA is to help the Literacy Council develop and implement an intergenerational literacy program on the Peninsula. Our goal is a program that specifically serves the needs of illiterate parents of young children. That's an ambitious goal and we have gotten a good start on the tasks required to make the goal reality: developing specific program goals and objectives, surveying similar programs in other communities with methods and materials that can be used in our program, identifying community resources available and developing useful partnerships, recruiting volunteers, developing public awareness, and raising money. I have spent my first few weeks as a VISTA on the road, on the phone, and in a crash course on how to do fund raising.

I have been very impressed by the willingness of organizations, groups, and individuals in this area to support literacy efforts. As I survey the community to determine the availability of public and private resources for the intergenerational program, people with ideas, time, connections, and some money have made committments to support the program in many ways. A small but very active group of volunteers has been organized to help with program development. They have undertaken the challenging task of developing a neighborhood based program utilizing volunteers who will do literacy training with parents and help them develop family literacy skills. The public libraries in Hampton and Newport News as well as Foster Grandparents have been lined up as partners in the program. We hope to have the first neighborhood sites in operation this Spring. The scope of the program will depend on the results of a fund raising drive currently underway. We have also applied for grant funding through Adult Basic Education.

In addition to working on the intergenerational program, I am also training to become a certified tutor trainer through Laubach Literacy Action. This certification will enable me to assist the work of the Literacy Council in a very practical fashion when my VISTA year has ended.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Ms. Betz.

Mr. Hyman Bookbinder.

Mr. BOOKBINDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate very much your accommodating my individual problem. I am honored and humbled to be part of this panel.

I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I looked at the calendar and I realized that this week is literally, precisely 25 years since that week during which I called Sargent Shriver from New York to say, "I hear the President appointed you General of the war on poverty. I want to enlist." He invited me to come back to Washington and I did that.

By the way, if I may be permitted a pun, there is no other record of any major war in history having been fought and conducted so brilliantly and effectively by a sergeant.

I came here and I had two jobs at OEO. First, I was the Executive Officer of the President's Task Force which created the OEO package. In that service, I became aware of a very basic, underlying fact which remains today, that the war on poverty—any war on poverty—will not be won unless it is raged on many battlefronts, many battlefronts—education, housing and so on.

Then I was the Assistant Director of OEO for the first three-and-a-half years of OEO's existence. Sargent Shriver gave me the responsibility for participating in the mobilizing of private and volunteer resources.

I learned then what is really the basic point that we want to make today that all of us are contributing to making, and that is that not only is it important to have the private sector and local governments and individuals, but they are all anxious and ready to participate.

You have already heard eloquent testimony here of the people who wanted to participate and did participate. I am heartened by the fact that after having to rage backwards to keep this program alive—by the way, my files remind me, also, that in 1971, among many other appearances before this Committee, I appeared in 1971 to urge that you reject the recommendation of the Nixon Administration to end VISTA. It has been a long battle.

I am heartened by the fact that this new Republican administration is associated with words like "kinder and gentler", with words about volunteers. I am really impressed by that. I do not think we ought to let that rhetoric become merely the source for jokes on television and cartoons.

It is in that spirit that I hope this administration will join the Democrats in the government, in the Congress, in continuing major volunteer programs.

I want to take the last two or three minutes that I have, if I may, to go beyond the VISTA program because you have a whole slew of fantastic witnesses. By the way, I have glanced at Shriver's testimony and you have a fantastic group ahead of you.

Altogether too many people, including so-called liberals, have found it too easy to say that the social programs will fold or the poverty war was a failure. I deny that emphatically.

Did every program work? No.

Did every single dollar bring about its intended use? No, it did not.

I ask, most sincerely, and I think it is very important that we really be willing to face this thing: Has every defense contract yielded a perfect product and at minimum cost? Has every cancer project brought us a cure? Has every space launching been successful?

Why is a less than perfect record for social programs less tolerable to society than failed economic or military diplomatic policies? There are literally thousands of babies, thousands of babies, being born every single day who, if we fail to do what is necessary in the years ahead, are going to be poor the rest of their lives.

We have the obligation to ask today what President Kennedy asked just weeks before he died: "Who are the poor? Why are they poor? What can be done to get them out of poverty, not just relieve their poverty?"

There is one fact we already have, clearly established, and we dare not ignore it. Thirteen million of our children in America today are poor, one out of five, and among black children, it is one out of two. Twenty-five years from today, will these children be the parents of yet another generation of poor kids?

Mr. Chairman, 25 years ago, this Committee persuaded the Congress to enact the law that committed the nation, in the words of that law, "to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty."

You acted in the spirit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who, 25 years before that, had proclaimed: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who already have much; it is whether we do enough for those who have too little."

That should be the test today, too. VISTA has been one of the most poignant moves we have made to meet that test. It merits our applause and our continued support.

Footnote: The official history of VISTA says that I was the author of the word VISTA and the phrase that led to it. I have to confess to you that I think it is in error. I did not call the word, but I have always been associated with it, because it is a proud and noble word.

The word VISTA itself, the Volunteers In Service to America is what we are talking about. It is noble. Charity is noble, too, but VISTA and the war on poverty is not charity. It is to permit people to do things for themselves.

I am prompted to say that, because this morning at 7:00 o'clock, I picked up The Washington Post and I read an article about a synagogue in Greenbelt that offered its help to a Catholic school that had been burned down.

The very first words of that article say, "In the Jewish faith, the greatest gift is to help someone to become self-sufficient." That is what this is all about.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hyman Bookbinder follows:]

STATEMENT OF HYMAN BOOKBINDER

TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

February 23, 1989

I am most grateful for this opportunity to make a brief statement today. I feel at home before this Committee, having come here 25 years ago to urge a Congressional declaration of war against poverty as recommended by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and having returned several times over the years to urge continuation and adequate financing of that war.

I am a veteran of that war and shall always be grateful for the opportunity to make some contribution to its success. As Executive Officer of the President's Task force on Poverty in 1964, I learned quickly what we must never lose sight of, namely, that there is no single, simple formula for the eradication of poverty, that the effort required then and continues to require today battles on many fronts--education, especially illiteracy, family stability, economic opportunity, health, welfare reform, and much more. Later, as Assistant Director of OEO for its first 3 1/2 years, I was responsible primarily for the mobilization of local and private resources in the war on poverty; that service persuaded me not only that local and private groups should be part of the war but that they wanted very much to be involved and could make a major difference. No program more than VISTA better illustrates the underlying premise of our original mission of OEO: Federal mandating and co-ordination of a range of anti-poverty programs carried out by local authorities, with maximum citizen and volunteer participation.

The official history of VISTA states that I am the author of the words that produced the acronym VISTA. I really am not sure I was, but am happy to accept the credit for it. I do know that I supported the title because it was a noble concept, Volunteers in Service to America. It remains as noble today, an opportunity for men and women to give of themselves in a variety of services to help their country. Charity to the poor is noble too, but VISTA is not charity; it is a resource for helping communities and civic-minded organizations provide opportunities for poor people to escape from the poverty into which they were born or into which they dropped because of conditions they could not control.

America's communities, America itself, have benefitted from the more than 100,000 VISTA volunteers who have served these last 25 years not only from the specific contributions they made at the time to literacy and health and community development programs in which they were involved, but from what VISTA did for the volunteers themselves to prepare them for better and larger contributions to the public interest and to their respective communities. America's ranks of local

and state officials, of members of the Congress, of health commissioners and educators and foundation officials have been enriched by thousands of men and women educated and inspired by their VISTA service.

Mr. Chairman, VISTA, as part of the OEO package, was initiated during a Democratic administration and has always had overwhelming Democratic support. But if there has ever been a so-called "social program" that deserved overwhelming Republican support, it is VISTA. It has always been troubling and difficult for me to understand why this program has not enjoyed such support. As far back as 1971 -- 18 years ago, during the Nixon Administration -- I appeared before this Committee and testified that "I am disturbed over the pending termination of VISTA as an integral part of OEO." And during the Reagan years I was dismayed over the hostility to the program.

Today, however, with a new Republican President in place, I am encouraged by the heightened interest in and public discussion of various proposals for national service or expanded volunteer activities. Talk of a "kinder, gentler" nation and "points of light" should not become empty clichés or excuses for comedy routines. I welcome the YES proposal (Youth Engaged in Service to America), not necessarily on its inherent merits, but at least as an additional stimulus to the resurgence of interest in needed volunteer programs. And that will, I hope, include a more sympathetic and supportive review of VISTA at the White House.

Above all, Mr. Chairman, I was heartened by the comments of our new Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. On accepting President Bush's appointment, Jack Kemp called for a new "war on poverty." I must say that after years of relentless and sometimes cruel bashing of the war on poverty by conservatives, it was most gratifying to hear this new Bush cabinet member -- one considered a tough conservative -- assert so boldly that the nation needed a renewed war on poverty. His embrace of that phrase, I trust, will now permit a more balanced, objective look at what the original attack on poverty sought to do -- and what in fact it did do.

There were disappointments during these last 25 years. There were some failures. There was no final victory in the war on poverty. But we can look back with pride -- I surely do -- and declare there were many victories. These hearings will record the story of VISTA's victories. Other hearings and other inquiries have documented the benefits enjoyed by millions of kids in Head Start, of the hundreds of thousands of Job Corps trainees and Upward Bound students and Foster Grandparents and Neighborhood Youth Corpsmen. And let it be clear that the war on poverty did more than run a dozen OEO programs; it sparked Medicare and Medicaid and low-cost housing and food stamp programs. It led to an American consciousness about poverty that led to tax breaks for the poor. It made "safety-net", albeit insufficiently implemented, a guideline for numerous Federal actions.

It is not, as some assert, that the war on poverty was not good. It was not good enough. It was a war we tired of too soon. It was a war we failed to adjust to new and ominous challenges: epidemic of teenage pregnancies and broken families; drugs and crime; massive homelessness; crippling illiteracy; changing work requirements.

Did every program of the Sixties work? Of course not.

Was every dollar used to its maximum potential use? Of course not.

Should we in the '90's and in the 21st Century just reinstate and increase the funding of Great Society programs? Of course not

Of course some programs didn't work well, or at all. Of course some people in the programs got nothing out of them. Of course there was some abuse, even some hanky-panky.

Well, now, has every defense contract yielded a perfect product-- and at minimum cost? Has every cancer project brought us a cure? Has every space launching been successful?

Why is a less-than perfect record for social programs less tolerable to society than failed economic or military or diplomatic policies?

There are literally thousands of babies being born every single day who -- if we fail to do what is necessary in the years ahead -- are doomed to be poor the rest of their lives. We have the obligation again to ask today the very questions asked by President Kennedy in 1963. Who are the poor? Why are they poor? What can be done to get them out of poverty, not just relieve their poverty?

There is one fact we do have -- and we dare not ignore it. Thirteen million our children in America today are poor -- one out of five. And among black children, it is one out of two. Twenty-five years from today, will these children be the parents of yet another generation of poor kids?

Mr. Chairman, 25 years ago this Committee persuaded the Congress to enact a law that committed the nation, in the words of that law, "to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty." You acted in the spirit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who, about 25 years earlier, had proclaimed:

> "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who already have much; it is whether we do enough for those who have too little."

That test of progress challenges us still. VISTA is one of the most poignant moves we have made to meet the test. It merits our applause and our continued support.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Bookbinder.

I would like to just ask a few questions of the panel. We are quite pleased with your testimony and the fact that you were willing to appear here today. You have quite a bit of experience that we definitely want to draw on, as we pursue reauthorization and hopefully the expansion of the VISTA Program.

One of the current concerns about VISTA is the declining participation of young people in the program. In 1978, 47 percent of VISTAs were under age 25; last year, only 17 percent were.

While one of the strengths of the program is that it does make room for all age groups, we are worried about the fact that it is beginning to be a one-sided matter, that the very young are not inspired to participate.

Many of you served as young people, as you pointed out. How did you hear about VISTA? What did you find most attractive about the program as a young person? From your experiences, what do you consider to be the most effective ways of attracting young people today to the program? I think three of you served as young people.

Ms. RUBACKY. Thank you.

I would just like to respond by saying that information about the program about the opportunities is one of the very basic ways. I inquired about this just last year, as I referred to in my testimony, when my brother had a very serious difficulty getting into the program.

We were told that the positions were all filled; that there were not sufficient positions—2600 was the number—and they did not need to do a lot of recruitment publicity for a number that had already been filled.

That is a sheer irony to me, and I believe that giving people an opportunity by giving them information about the existence of the program is one opportunity there.

I would like to also say that I think it has become increasingly difficult for young people, given the financial burden that they carry when they leave school or if they are not even able to go to higher education because of fiscal problems.

I would certainly support the idea posed earlier by Congressman Smith to make some type of assistance available to offset the loans that students have incurred or perhaps to postpone them while they are doing some form of national service. That is my idea.

Chairman OWENS. Any other comments?

Judge ROSENBAUM. Very briefly, I know that when I was in, they were looking for more specialization. Just people who are willing to be helpful, which is in many cases simply what is available when you have had no experience other than a bachelor's degree, is not all that useful.

Chairman OWENS. Do you mean today, they are looking for more specialization?

Judge ROSENBAUM. That is true.

Chairman OWENS. Whereas, when you were in, they were not?

Judge ROSENBAUM. That is what they said they were looking for back then, and looking to get people who were trained as educators, people who were trained in the ability to have contacts in edu-

cation, did some things in hospitals, did some work in those kinds of areas, and a bachelor's degree does not do it.

I will tell you that my law clerks right now—lots and lots of them—have $40,000 student loans. When they are offered a substantial amount of money and neither abatement nor forestalling of those loans. They are in no position to even dream of volunteer service when law firms will pay them $65,000 and those kids can go to work and pay more money than I had on a mortgage when I took my first house.

Chairman OWENS. Ms. Burney, would you like to make a comment?

Ms. BURNEY. My comment is that VISTA is a valuable program and needs to be continued. As a VISTA volunteer, I have been out and have shared and have looked at the literacy part of the program.

Just as my panelists, the people who sit here with me this morning, have said, for the young people to get involved, it needs to be some way to get them involved into VISTA, to let them share and to learn that it is more out there than just being out there just to go to school and to come out of school and to find a job, but to volunteer their time, to see that, you know, it's more.

People need them. They are needed, not just to go out and to find a job, but they are needed in the community as volunteers. Most young people today do not even think that volunteer is necessary to do, and I've been volunteering ever since I have been 17 years old.

It is a valuable thing. If there is any way that the panel could come up with just extending to let young people know that VISTA is here, you know, it would—there is a great need.

Chairman OWENS. There are a number of proposals now which are emphasizing part-time versus full time volunteers. In view of the fact that VISTA calls for full-time volunteering and, in many cases, calls for living among the people you are helping do you think full-time discourages people? Would you care to comment on that?

Ms. BURNEY. I would like to comment on that.

Chairman OWENS. Yes, Ms. Burney.

Ms. BURNEY. I did a lot of thinking before I became a VISTA volunteer and I know when I became a VISTA with the Literacy Council, there were quite a few people who were interested in the position.

Most of them could not really handle full-time employment as a VISTA. There were a lot of people who were available for twenty hours a week or 25 or thirty hours a week to work as VISTAs in our community, a lot more than who were available to work forty or fifty hours a week as a VISTA.

I think you could really expand the resources of the VISTA Program if you included part-time VISTA employment as an option.

Chairman OWENS. Yes, Mr. Newman?

Mr. NEWMAN. I think in a way, the question almost is a corollary of your first question with respect to young people. I think it is important to have part-time volunteer opportunities in this country.

I am not sure whether or not VISTA is the right place for that. It seems to me that if you can find a way to attract young people, you are finding ways to attract potentially full-time volunteers.

When young people leave college and when they leave high school—and we had a number of high school graduates in my day who were VISTA volunteers who had not gone to college—that is the time when they feel available, open to, and interested in giving full time, full hours, to a job and to a voluntary commitment.

So, I think the issue of how you approach young people, the way VISTA designs itself, the way the broad outreach into colleges, into youth in this country and having young people begin to understand what VISTA is, it is a way of focusing on full-time volunteers rather than part time, which is not to eliminate part time as a valuable asset for all of our communities.

Nobody who works full time who is 28 years old, thirty years old and is raising a family can really devote themselves to full-time and VISTA may not be the right place for them.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you. Any other comment?

Ms. BURNEY. I mentioned in my testimony about the training kit that, as a VISTA volunteer, once we worked with the parents, then we VISTAs went back and put on our thinking caps. After we put on our thinking caps, this is what we came up with.

This is part of what the three VISTAs came up with. This is laying the foundation. This is the kit that more than 200 programs have ordered. This came from your VISTA volunteers. I would like to say that I am very proud of this, you know. I am very proud. We worked hard on this.

There are two of us with children and just think now, if two of us with children can do this, just think what the young people that don't have children, coming out of school, can do if they put their thinking caps on and just volunteered and sat down and talked to find out what they can do. I know there are a lot of them out there that can do it.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you. May we have a copy of your kit for the record?

Ms. BURNEY. Yes, sir.

Chairman OWENS. Without objection, we would like to note it.

[The kit will be available at the subcommittee office.]

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This was excellent testimony, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to particulary note Ms. Rubacky, who did work in Dallas for some time and did some excellent instigating of community access and community involvement.

I remember the rendering plant controversy well and with some amount of shame, frankly, on behalf of Dallas that the rest of Dallas looked the other way. It took an outsider, a transplanted Texan, at least for one year, to come and remind us all that we did not have to do that; that we did not have to have an unhealthy situation in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

It is my compliments for what you did, and for some of the other instigation. The Block Partnership and other things that you started are not only alive and well, but they work throughout the city.

The city of Dallas does, on its own volition, enforce our health laws at this point, I am glad to say. We are having some difficulty

enforcing our minimum housing code in public housing, but that is a problem of the federal government prohibition.

I have two technical questions for the panel and then two broader, philosophical questions. The technical questions first: There seems to be a mini-controversy in VISTA that has been touched on here over the national recruitment versus the community recruitment issue.

I have heard stories of volunteers for VISTA who were unable to access the system. I have also heard some stories of some improvement in the last year with the 800-number that seems to have made some improvement.

My question, though, as we design the reauthorization is: Should we continue to focus on community recruitment, that is, recruitment of volunteers from that community to stay in that community as the primary source of VISTA volunteers or should we move back to the days of the 1970s, in which most VISTA volunteers came from Washington, D.C. and then went to Dallas to tell Dallasites how to act—in your case, it was quite successful—or should we make the system more accessible for both groups of volunteers?

Ms. Rubacky?

Ms. RUBACKY. I would say that it is a benefit to the program to have the mix of both nationally recruited and locally recruited volunteers. There were both locally recruited and nationally recruited volunteers on my project at Block Partnership even twelve years ago.

I think it would be a loss to the program to not continue to recruit the local volunteers. I do think it is currently a problem in the program that there is very little opportunity for the national recruit. I would personally favor expansion of the national program.

I do not think that it is realistic unless there is an expansion of the broad number of opportunities for volunteers, because I think with limited resources, I understand why the focus is on the local recruitment.

In the best of all possible worlds, I would favor, and I believe that many others would also favor, a balance of national and local recruits.

Mr. BARTLETT. In your judgment, the balance is now over-balanced towards local recruits than national recruits?

Ms. RUBACKY. In my perspective, I think it is skewed to too much local recruitment and not enough national recruitment. I also feel that there is insufficient opportunity, anyway, so I do understand why it is skewed. But, if we could expand the program, I would work towards a better balance, yes.

Mr. BARTLETT. Other comments? Yes, sir?

Mr. NEWMAN. The only comment I would make is that I think we are over balanced now. We do not have enough national recruits. I understand the implication of your question in terms of outsiders coming in, and I think that is a difficulty and something that communities and outsiders always have to deal with.

On the other hand, whenever I seek somebody as an administrative assistant on my staff, I frequently look to people who have never been involved in my field, because a friend of mine, who was a mentor of mine, once told me, "They ask the stupidest ques-

tions." The stupidest questions are often the questions that you have forgotten to ask for twenty years.

The incident that Ms. Rubacky describes might not have happened had it been a Dallas resident, because politically, they just assumed that had to be themselves. The outsider coming in can weigh those questions and make those things happen often, if he or she can work well within the community.

So, I think there needs to be a balance, but I think we are over balanced now towards the community volunteer.

Mr. BARTLETT. Of course, there are instances on both sides. There are also instances of VISTA volunteers who are six months into the project and have still not come in out of the fog as far as being on the ground.

If you are a student from The University of California at Berkeley working in the South Bronx, it does take awhile to become acclimated and the residents of the South Bronx may well think that you do not have their best interests at heart.

Mr. NEWMAN. I would agree with that and I think that is why a good mix in that community might be helpful. If you had both local people who were volunteers and a University of California student in the South Bronx, those local people would be helpful.

Mr. BARTLETT. A second question of a technical nature, and this is open to anybody who has an opinion about it, either informed or otherwise. One of the issues that we will have to—and ought to—deal with is that in a prior reauthorization of VISTA, before any of you came to the program or after any of you came to the program, the Congress began our usual micromanagement—and I confess that I was at least a small part of it—of deciding that since we wanted to emphasize literacy, which is a good thing, we created a separate Literacy VISTA Corps out of a separate pot of money.

I am told that the Literacy VISTA volunteer looks exactly like the VISTA volunteer except if they are in a literacy program and they discover that they need to do some work in drug or alcohol or substance abuse, they are not able to do that because they are only a literacy volunteer.

Do you have any thoughts about whether we should merge those two pools of volunteers, as far as from the federal level or leave it like it is or make other changes?

Ms. BURNEY. I think that anyone is illiterate to anything they do not know about until they get involved. I think both of them should be merged. I have heard that the national is not as equal as the local.

As a VISTA volunteer, in my period of my volunteer work as a VISTA volunteer and not having any kids that I have to go to or be with, I would be glad to be a VISTA volunteer again and go elsewhere, besides my neighborhood if I had the opportunity.

In answer to your question, I think both of them should be merged. I think that you can, as an illiterate person, that don't know that—and we have a lot—it is bad to take drugs. I know a whole lot of people. You could get volunteers that have been on drugs and are off drugs that could help, a former drug addict, if they were a VISTA volunteer.

They could go back to those drug centers and give their help and their knowledge and it would help.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Ms. Burney.

Any other questions? Mr. Bookbinder?

Mr. BOOKBINDER. Might I give you what I would call an uninformed response, uninformed because, as I am said, I am not familiar with how exactly the law requires the division.

I can think of no higher single priority for this country now in this whole area of preparing people for self- dependence than the elimination of illiteracy in this country. We knew that 25 years ago when we got started.

We know it with a vengeance now. Survey after survey is telling us how serious that problem is and we had better do something about it. I would just suggest that whatever you do, be sure not to contribute to or give the impression that you do not recognize the importance of this issue.

I will do a last bit of reminiscing today to tell you that when we knew 25 years ago that there would be no more than half a billion dollars for the war on poverty, I wrote Mr. Shriver a memorandum saying that if, indeed, there is no more than that resource available, and even though we know we have to deal on many battlefronts, let's take the first year or two of this war against poverty and use it all for the elimination of illiteracy in this country. That is how important I thought it was then.

I feel even more strongly today that that has to be a very, very major drive for this country.

Mr. BARTLETT. A philosophical question, then. In fact, it is directed to you, Mr. Bookbinder, along those lines. I noticed your well thought out and helpful comments about the war on poverty.

I would inquire as to whether you think that, as we move into the 1990s, that the country is poised for a new type of war on poverty, not merely a new war on poverty. You commented that you did not think we should merely resurrect and reauthorize many of the programs of the 1960s and 1970s.

I wonder if our new directions—and you said that Jack Kemp called for a new war on poverty. I was there when he did and, in fact, I think that is a very helpful direction, a direction of instead of the federal programs that transfer money into the pockets of low-income persons, a war on poverty that empowers them to achieve economic opportunity; in the area of housing, to empower them for low income home opportunities, of freedom of choice, of people living where they want to and not in public housing districts; the disabled, removing barriers for jobs; education, so that parents can send children to the school where they want to send their children and not where one governmental agency or another tells them to or an employment with an earned income credit for take home pay, instead of raising the minimum wage as an approach.

Do you see some new directions in the war on poverty?

Mr. BOOKBINDER. I am going to restrain myself from commenting on some of the last things you said because, really, with all due respect, I do not think they are really close enough to the basic subject we are trying to deal with here today.

In some respects, the issue is no different, in my judgment, from 25 years ago, but there are new aspects. The homelessness is another kind of issue we have to address. The explosion of single

parent families, the explosion of teenage pregnancies, all of which is either a result of or a cause of additional poverty, has to be dealt with.

But the basic idea of making it possible for people to be self-reliant is and was the goal that it is now. Nothing angers me more, Congressman, and has angered me over the years than to find people who do not understand that that was the purpose equating and proclaiming and making great speeches about the fact that it is not good enough to simply give money to people; we've got to get them off the welfare rolls, as if that wasn't exactly what we were saying.

This is the whole idea of VISTA and every other poverty program—Job Corps, Head Start. That was the test: Is it a contribution to getting people off of the welfare roll, out of poverty? That always was the guide and should be the guide.

Now, relieving people of their poverty is another noble cause for society and the government, also, but that is not what we are talking about, so if we want to call it a new program—and Mr. Kemp's enterprise owns programs like that with very, very serious consideration.

First, you have to start with a determination to use the resources of the government. I am not talking about money alone now, but using the resources, the organizing ability, the motivating potential that is involved in an administration under Congress, to say that we will not tolerate this thing any longer and we are going to do what has to be done.

Should we have an open mind and open arms to new ideas? Of course, and we always have. When the program was authorized, the phrase Head Start was not even known. It was as we got started and motivated and understood what had to be done, that we learned in our first months. We said that this was the kind of program that was needed. Foster Grandparents was not a phrase in the original hearings and a lot of other programs like that.

I am sorry to give you such a long answer, but yes, we should be flexible, open minded, not merely reinstate old programs, but let's also give credit where credit is due, and that is that those old programs did a lot of good.

They encouraged a lot of local groups, they encouraged a lot of people, to do the right thing. This country is a better country now because of what we did, but it has a long way to go.

Mr. BARTLETT. Mr. Bookbinder, I appreciate your comments. During the course of the discourse—and I hope there is a national dialogue on this subject—I do think that it is not especially helpful to go back to the old programs, necessarily, and debate the merits and demerits. They had both merits and demerits.

I think it is important at this point for all sides of the discourse, a Bookbinder and a Kemp, to move in from the statement of the goals into the specifics as to how we can achieve that, and I think some new areas and some new specifics. Some will be, no doubt, controversial. I tried to name a few today.

Judge?

Judge ROSENBAUM. I just had a brief thought. For me, the value—I was a Republican when I went in; I was a Republican

while I was there; I was a Republican and now, I'm not, because I was appointed as a Judge and I am no longer in politics.

Leaving that where it is for a moment, the nice thing about VISTA was that it was not a programmatic program. Not one of the people who is up here described a single thing that can be described in, you know, a war on poverty, really, I mean, you want to call it metaphysically a war on poverty.

They set up a community center. Some old people chopped wood and did work; teaching people to read. This is not one program. This is not another. This is not an urban center. This is not a rural. This was a hands-on immersion in trying to deal with helping people, eyes to eyes, who had a problem and trying to help them fix it.

There was very little—in my experience, I will tell you there was not anybody who sat down with great ideas or great engineering. Why did we do a bail bond project? Because folks were sitting in jails and their families came and said, "Why can't they get out? All they need is a ten dollar bond."

From that brilliant statement came a whole program, but it was not a program set here, it wasn't a program set by Sargent Shriver; it just arose.

I think that, to the extent that you try and tie VISTA to a set of programs, you will, to that extent, limit its attractiveness, make it more partisan for the volunteers. They are volunteers; there were people of all political stripes.

I will tell you one of the other problems that this woman pointed out, and I think you might have suggested it in a sense when you spoke about outsiders. I know that the biggest pressure that was going for a long time was the community organizer VISTA. There was a great deal of pressure on that issue.

In most cases, the community organizer, this woman did not go down there, I suspect, with the bright idea of tearing out a rendering plant or making it more expensive to run the business. I think she went down there with her nose and her nose told her there was a project.

With those things in mind, I would suggest that you try and avoid making it much more programmatic than it needs to be.

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Martinez?

Mr. MARTINEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have heard several success stories here and, of course, there are always success stories for any particular program. But there are also a lot of horror stories still out there that we have not dealt with.

I do not mean to be a negative person because I'm not; I am usually very optimistic. I do see from the experiences that I have had, the need for more programs and the need for expansion of VISTA.

Volunteers alone are not going to answer the problems we need to solve. There have got to be other programs involved. While there is no doubt in my mind that VISTA has established a lot of programs and put them in place and that some are still operating, as you indicated, and that some are beneficial, that is enough in itself.

I've heard much talk of these wars: The war on poverty, the war on drugs and so on. I think that is a terminology we use to make the public believe that we are really serious about doing something

about the problem. But in fighting the war and winning victory, we fall short.

We fight a war like we fought in Vietnam and we fought in Korea. I don't think that is sufficient anymore. If we are talking about moving into the 1990s in a new direction, then we had better talk about how effective the programs are that we have, how much more effective we can make them, and what we can add to them to make them even greater.

This leads me to a question I have, particularly of you, Judge. You said you served and that service gave you personal gratification, I imagine. And it also gave you that valuable experience of looking at a different kind of America and a different part of America in a different way. It gave you more insight to a lot of things you may have been ignorant of before.

In that experience, did you change the weighting of your values? We are talking about literacy programs right now and the question of whether they should be set aside or whether they should be bulked into one.

The problem I have with bulking it in is that, often, if a program director in a particular area determines that they do not need literacy programs, they are not going to get them even though there might be a need there. That is simply relying on the individual's assessment of the problems.

Your indication that you were not aware of the tremendous illiteracy rate in your community supports the point that I am trying to make.

When you were there, I imagine there were no literacy programs in place, per se, in the Chicago area, were there?

Judge ROSENBAUM. I was not aware of any, but I was not at all affiliated with an organization that dealt with that and I did not mention it in my notes, but I did private tutoring of one child in the projects, also.

He was a child who was determined to have a lot of learning abilities and one of the social workers just asked me if I would help him do reading and arithmetic tutoring which I did for a couple of years.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Did you get a chance then, as you reflect on it now, to assess or evaluate the need for literacy programs in those kinds of communities?

Judge ROSENBAUM. I have to say I did not spend any of my time considering that and I haven't, really.

You said one thing that I just want to respond to real quickly at the beginning. I had the sense that fighting the battle and not winning it is a matter of concern to you. Let me tell you that after my one year of experience there and my two years staying on, I have not a clue about how to win those battles, ultimately.

This is based on absolutely right up on the front line. I know about how you do X-project and how you solve X problem, but to solve E-problem, I cannot do it. I have not even got a good suggestion.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Well, I, from the personal experience of having grown up in a neighborhood like that and having had the experience of having had a lot of biases and bigotries put in my way and

having overcome those, I do have a clue as to how to deal with them. I think you touched on it.

If we can provide enough leadership programs for the people that are in these communities, that is one of their big handicaps.

Judge ROSENBAUM. Literacy is not a problem that I ever considered.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Some people say people are poor because they are lazy, they are freeloaders and they have no drive to make them a success. I think that is wrong. I think many of the people that are poor are born poor. They do not find, the avenue out of that impoverished environment because we have not provided the avenue out.

I come from a Hispanic community, and the drop-out rate is far higher than for any other ethnic group. Let me make one thing clear.

In those kinds of neighborhoods, not only Hispanic and black, but it is whites who live in those kinds of situations, too, who do not have the advantage of special tutoring, the one-on-one tutoring he talked about. They fall behind in school and pretty soon, they get frustrated and give up and get out of school.

They have no chance at real success in life because they do not have basic skills. As I travel around the country visiting Job Centers, one of the real crying needs is to provide basic skills for people, especially the dislocated workers, so that they can receive training.

They actually lack the basic skills to receive the training to go from an industry where they only had to work with their hands into an industry where now, they have to work with their minds and they have to learn to read and write to be able to do that job, just to receive the training.

I think that is a clue as to how we overcome that poverty. It is not for everybody. I don't believe that there is a utopia, that everybody will be fine. But I think we can make a hell of a dent on poverty. I think if we provide those people with that opportunity, they can provide opportunities for others. That leads me to my next question.

I notice in these programs, that only six percent of the total volunteers are Hispanic and yet, 23 percent are black and, of course, that's more in keeping with the national racial figures. Still, if you look at going into communities like that where poverty is, and sadly and tragically, they exist primarily in large minority communities, the potential for those people to help because they set role models for the people they are helping—is there.

I wonder if you can tell me from your experience, why there isn't a greater number of people from those communities induced into volunteering and to help them?

Mr. BOOKBINDER. If you are addressing the program to me, I think at the very beginning and I think throughout the program, no matter who was sitting at the White House, I think the agencies related to the struggle against poverty, whether it be in the OEO or elsewhere, always have been mindful of exactly what you are talking about.

If there have been disappointing areas, I think we ought to look to try to understand what might be done even better to recruit

more of those ranks, but your point is well taken and something should be done about that.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Ms. Burney, let me ask you: Don't you find that there is great satisfaction in the fact that you help and become a role model for other people that, like you, will follow behind and become successful, because they can look at you and say, "Since you did it, I can do it, too."

Ms. BURNEY. Yes, that's basically what I set out to do. I put my guards down. I just took my guards down and just put everything up front. I did not know how things would turn out. I didn't know how I was going to react, but I'm glad with the success not only within myself but with the success of the people that I had communicated with or who have heard me talk or who have seen me on TV or whatever and had the response.

I am glad to know that I was there, you know, to be that person that they made up in their mind to say, "Well, if she can do it, I can do it." That's all I want to hear is: If she can do it, I can do it.

I have been in poverty right here in Washington, D.C. and I was raised right here in Washington, D.C., and so I know.

Mr. MARTINEZ. You had a packet which the Chairman asked to be made a part of the record, which had instructional material in it.

I am going to ask my next question of you, Becky, because you are into leadership training and you spoke about being able to communicate with other programs and implement other programs there. Do you see the benefit of a national clearinghouse for literacy programs?

There are certainly a lot of programs. I visited one in San Jose that is bringing—not necessarily just younger people—but older people, to the level of high school graduation, GED, and even high school diplomas, in programs where they complete years of school programs in months.

I don't know how valuable this information is to other literacy centers throughout the United States, but would you think that a clearinghouse would be valuable to your program?

Ms. BETZ. That would save a lot of work, a lot of leg work. As soon as I got involved, the first thing I did was get on the phone and talk to the people at PLAN and request a copy of their packet, which really has a lot of material, to use as a reference for somebody who wants to start a family literacy project.

You can tell there is a lot of work and effort and very excellent ideas that went into that packet, and it is a good resource. But I haven't found one resource that I could go to that could tell me that there are these programs throughout the country and these people you could contact to give you good ideas.

There are numerous organizations that can help you with that and, in the State of Virginia, they are trying to organize an adult education clearinghouse in Richmond that is some help with that kind of problem.

I'd like to address a question you asked earlier that Molly responded to about getting people from within the communities involved in the project. We would love to get more people involved as VISTAs in literacy efforts in Hampton.

I think one thing that Molly said was really important, that she had to put her guard down and go out and put herself out there as a role model. I think it's very difficult for a lot of people who were non-readers who now have a great sense of accomplishment from learning how to read.

It's difficult for them to go out and put themselves in front of other people in the community as role models like that, because they don't like to say they didn't read. I really respect her for doing that. That adds a very important dimension to their program in Washington.

We have a few people who work within our Literacy Council as volunteers who are new readers who do a great deal for us in terms of motivating other people to participate in our program. It is very important.

Mr. MARTINEZ. The last question I have is for Ms. Rubacky. I am going to make a statement and then I would like you to respond to it.

You mentioned the lack of funding for the program. We are lucky to have a program at all, because several of the Reagan budgets, called for doing away with it. The last budget, which leads me to the concern for the set-aside for literacy programs, asks for no funding for the literacy portion of the program: they opposed the set-aside.

The problem I have with that is unless we say is—and say it with a vengeance—that this is a particular problem, especially in these poverty communities, and we need to direct funds directly to that and make sure the funds are directed to it. To some people, drugs is a more important problem. But because drug problems often actually stem from people being illiterate and not being able to do anything, and that's what they get into.

If you look at the efforts of the past administration to do away with the program, what advice have you got for us in that regard? Understand that from 1981 to 1983, 61 percent of the funding was cut.

Ms. RUBACKY. I watched it with sheer terror, actually. Having been on the board of Friends of VISTA, it was our intent to prevent that from happening. As an organization, Friends of VISTA, has actually said that there is an opportunity now that we have fought for the last eight years to save the body of the program, to actually keep the program alive, and now it is an opportunity to put some soul back into the body of the program.

It is unfortunate that so much energy and resources and time have had to be invested in making sure the program is not dismantled, but we do feel confident that there is support for the program and that now, efforts and examples can be used to expand it.

I do think that we have, hopefully, passed a time when there is denial of the existence of hunger in America; that there are statements to the effect that people are homeless because they want to be. I think we have basically passed that time.

Now, there is an opportunity for us to take a more realistic look at the poverty that exists and the human suffering that exists in this country, and direct resources to that. I would strongly recommend that, slowly but surely, increments be directed for the VISTA Program.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Do you think that VISTA could be the "thousand points of light" or was it a million points of light, the President talked about?

Ms. RUBACKY. I was going to say that if it was up to me, it would be a lot more than a thousand.

Mr. MARTINEZ. At any rate, I have a particular request of each of you that would care to respond. What is the importance of a national clearinghouse on literacy and of the literacy program itself? If you would respond to the committee, the committee would be sure to get it.

Ms. RUBACKY. A written response?

Mr. MARTINEZ. A written response. I need a written response, because one of the biggest concerns I have stems from one of the negative articles that was written about me during my campaign. It said that if there was a word with more than one syllable, that I had a hard time understanding what it meant and I needed an interpreter.

I would say in defense, "Well, that's a result of my lack of proper education at an early age in a very poor community where we didn't get a lot of dedicated teachers who cared about each individual student. So I have an excuse. I don't know what that person's excuse was who made that comment, because if I were an intelligent person, I wouldn't be making negative comments about anyone."

So, I would really like a response, because I know you are all in a position to assess and evaluate the need for literacy and especially a national clearinghouse. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Smith?

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the interests of time, I know that Sargent Shriver has been here for a bit and Senator Rockefeller is waiting in the back of the room, so let me simply personally thank the members of the panel for being here.

I made my notes and we talked about marketing. Let me just say a couple of words. We talked about marketing, and I remember leaving college in 1968, and it has been twenty years to the month since I started my first community-based adult literacy program. I was not a VISTA nor a member of the Peace Corps.

Let's not forget that the message that goes out when there are people marketing actively is that it is a legitimate form of activity and needed by this society. It spreads way beyond the programs themselves.

I would argue that we need to remember, as we ask higher educational institutions to be involved, and I thank you for your comments on the loan load that people bear; on the ways that we can legitimately get the institutions that include the coin of the realm in this country in terms of opportunity and privilege and choice, to say that this is important enough that we are going to, with government assistance, send a message that if you want training to get ready to do this for two years, we are going to help you with the burden that you accept when you do that.

To me, those messages go way beyond the finite boundaries of any one program. So, in terms of local versus national, I would say

we would call that dynamic tension where I come from. I grew up in Burlington, Vermont and now I live all the way down the road in Montpierce, 35 miles. The first time I went to town meeting and I stood up and had something to say, of course, someone said, "You from around here?" I said, "Oh, yes, I was born in Burlington." They said, "No."

I would say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so I would hope we would preserve the ability of people, Tricia, to go and take their nose and get so smart that they figure out what the problems are before the people with the energy and commitment who have grown up there or moved there get there.

You need oxygen to make a fire burn. If opportunity in this country is the fire we are trying to make burn, I think what you are about, to come back here and be here today, to try to keep it going is part of the oxygen. I thank you for what that has meant to me and to VISTA.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

I, again, want to thank all the panelists for giving us your testimony today. Thank you, very much.

Our next panel will be led by Senator John D. Rockefeller, joined by Mr. Sargent Shriver, and Ms. Donna Alvarado.

Senator, we know that you are in a bind and must leave immediately, so we will take your testimony first and submit any questions to you in writing. We know how to reach you and we will probably be in touch with you during the course of our considerations about the reauthorization of this program.

We will take your testimony and be in touch with you later, because I know you have to run.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, UNITED STATES SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Senator ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize about that, but we are doing confirmation hearings on Dr. Sullivan in the Senate Finance Committee.

I am very glad to be back here. I was here on the twentieth anniversary of VISTA, and I think Mr. Bartlett was also sitting there or close by at that time. Obviously, I am very proud of my VISTA experience, because it changed my life in every single way that I can imagine.

I went to West Virginia as a VISTA without the intention of staying there, but I stayed because of my VISTA experience. I have a cousin, Larry, who had a two-year VISTA experience working in Harlem. Count me as a devoted friend at the 30th and 35th.

I am not going to bore you, Mr. Chairman, by my experiences. I was requested to give a little bit of my personal experience and so I will do that. The man sitting at my right, Sargent Shriver, got me into trouble early.

I had set upon a career to be an expert in Asia and I had made that my major at college and studied for three years at a university in Japan where I had become, in fact, fluent in Japanese, and then I came back and went to Yale University in their Chinese Language Program.

Then I went to work for a fellow named Sargent Shriver in the Peace Corps here in Washington working on the Philippines Program and doing some recruiting for Sargent Shriver. Then I went on to the State Department and worked on the Indonesia Desk. That was clearly the direction I was going in.

I decided just before I made that final commitment of going back to the university and getting my doctorate in Chinese and Japanese studies that I would take one year and do something in this country that hopefully would be useful to somebody and, hopefully, useful to me.

I went to West Virginia. I had a friend in West Virginia, a fellow named Charlie Peters, who also worked for Sargent Shriver in the Peace Corps. That was really my reason for going there, as Charlie indicated there were a lot of problems in West Virginia. I knew that because that was a time when people were talking about Appalachia a lot, reading about it a lot.

So, I went down and first, they put me in a building in the capitol city of Charleston because they didn't know what to do with me. I wanted to be out in the field and said so, and got out into the field. In fact, this was 1964 and it was one of the first VISTA grants to the Appalachia Youth Program.

I went out to a community of 56 families in two counties with a small river splitting them and started in. There is no science to where you started in; you just kind of fumbled. Obviously, nobody knew what I was doing there, a tall, skinny fellow, born and brought up in New York, in a Land Rover with a Washington license plate. It didn't make sense to anybody.

It took me virtually six months of just being in this one community before I could become accepted even by the kids, much less the parents. I broke that difficult cycle, frankly, one day, in frustration, I just sat down on a railroad track that ran through the middle of the town and waited for somebody to come up and talk to me.

Some kids finally did and we tossed some rocks back and forth. We began to talk. That allowed me eventually to get into people's homes. I remember that our first community meeting was extraordinary because there had never been a community meeting.

People had never come together as a community. We are talking about a three-mile stretch with a house every hundred yards or so along a little river. At the community meeting, the women were willing to be very warm and to participate; men actually, at that meeting, I can remember sat sort of hunched down, squatted, facing away from the meeting, towards the walls of the building in which we were meeting.

It was a first major lesson about the incredible so- called psychology of failure that goes with people who are poor. This was seven miles beyond the end of any hard road. There was no school bus that went out to this community because the law said you didn't have to go two miles beyond the hard road in West Virginia at that time, so they didn't go out there. They didn't pick up kids.

They wondered why in the world the kids didn't go to school. If they did go to school, they were called "Crickers". That's "creek" but they say "crickers" in Appalachia. Kids can be rough on kids, and they were rough on those kids. They didn't have the advantage

of dental work or good clothes, maybe one pair of pants. A kid would drop out of school and you'd try and work with him and the reason would basically be because he would be picked on.

Interestingly enough, I was in Charleston, West Virginia, not long ago and the public school where all my children went was consolidating and bringing in some children from a poorer area. I read on the front page of the particular newspaper that some of the kids were being called "crickers". So, life changes and life doesn't change.

In any event, we did a lot. We worked on and developed a preschool program. We started a library, had music lessons, built a baseball field and had a baseball team, a zero and 24 record over two years because the kids had never played baseball. We built a basketball court, had a park, got ourselves a small park.

The whole question of introducing Pap smears, the social and economic difficulties with getting that going, was a real problem. Trying to get a school bus was a huge fight with the Board of Education. We finally got one.

We got going, after the first year, some 77 different programs in that community. Everything was a struggle. Obviously, I could not do anything in a year, so I decided to stay two years and then two years became 25 years. I think that's enough personal history.

I feel that it is unique that I am a Senator from a state where I went into VISTA, but VISTAs are remaining in states and do work just as valuable. There are a lot of VISTAs in West Virginia today who were there when I was there and they are still there, doing things just as important or more important. I think that is true all over the country.

VISTAs are loyal. VISTAs, like Peace Corps workers, tend to be public service oriented, and they pursue it. VISTA changes their life; Peace Corps changes their life. They give, but they are given much more. VISTA and the Peace Corps enrich this country beyond measure.

In any event, a couple of thoughts, Mr. Chairman, for what they are worth. I think VISTA is as relevant today and more needed today than ever. In some ways, it is a shadow of its former self, and I don't mean to demean it, but it is much smaller and there is less aggressive recruiting.

One of the VISTA volunteers that just spoke talked about being from New Brunswick, New Jersey, and she was sent to Dallas, Texas, to a Chicano barrio. That is the way it used to be. In other words, it was a matter of a national VISTA.

You did not go to where you were born; you went to someplace where you were different and where other people were different, where your newness and their newness to you created some kind of chemistry and symbiotic relationship which was productive. You could be both irreverent and sometimes be very reverent.

The concept of the national VISTA, not a local job placement service—and I am not implying that it is, but a VISTA volunteer being picked and sent elsewhere. Recruitment was referred to by Tricia Rubacky. She was recruited, she says on page 2. They came to her at her campus: "A recruiter came to the campus and suggested that I join VISTA." That is not going on as far as I know and if it is going on, then I am glad to know it.

But that needs to happen. People have to be recruited. One of the reasons for that is that the leadership nationally over these past number of years have not tended to talk about public service. I came right during the time of John F. Kennedy. That story is obvious.

Sargent Shriver changed my life when I got a letter from him when I was at Yale doing Chinese language studies. He said, "Come on down and be with the Peace Corps." He wrote me a handwritten letter, a big shot in Washington. Those things make a difference.

If you hear national leaders talking about VISTA, as we have heard President Bush talking about it. If we had heard Ronald Reagan talking about public service, not demeaning it but honoring it and encouraging young people to be a part of it, it did not get through in the right way.

Back then, it was part of your job as a leader to call upon others to serve. Surely, it was an idealistic time and sure, it was just after the Fifties and sure, life was a lot simpler then, but nevertheless, the message was moral and it was compelling.

Leaders felt it their responsibility to call on others, particularly young people, to get involved and do something useful other than make money. I have no objection to that—making money—but there are other values and those values are not—there is no such clarion call, Mr. Chairman, right now.

I might also say that VISTA has been run with imagination. It may still be run with imagination, but I really treasure the concept of the national volunteer, the person who is taken from one place and put into another. I think it is more healthy all around.

If someone is put into the same place they live, there is nothing wrong with that, but to me, VISTA ought to be greater and it ought to be more national. It ought to be bigger. I think Congress has the responsibility not just to keep it well, but to keep it really alive, make it stronger.

Today, in West Virginia, there are very few VISTAs. Those who are there are terrific, but there are very few. You don't hear about them because nobody talks about them. In the national leadership, the state leadership, you just don't hear it.

I think that we ought to put volunteers where they can make the most difference and where the worst problems are, because I think they can help make a difference. It is very difficult to sustain a difference after the volunteer leaves. If you leave a community after two years of work there and it is a very small community, 256 people in my case, more than half children, and when you leave the community, can the structure continue?

It is very hard to do that, but it is noticed and what happens inside yourself as a volunteer—I wasn't a volunteer. I was a VISTA worker. I was paid $6,450. What happens inside of yourself is enormous. You change. That's what this country has got to be about.

So, I am privileged to be here. VISTA changed my life. I would be writing a manuscript in Japanese somewhere, I suppose, if it hadn't been for Sargent Shriver who got me into the Peace Corps, and then that clarion call of national leadership which says that you can make a difference and it is your responsibility to do so, so come on.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. I want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule. We look forward to working with you as we develop the reauthorization proposals. I hope that you will be a co-sponsor in the Senate, of course, on the reauthorization legislation.

Senator ROCKEFELLER. You can count on that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, very much.

I am particularly pleased and honored to welcome Sargent Shriver. All of the personal stories have been told from that side of the table. I would like to tell one briefly myself.

The turning point in my life was when I left the Brooklyn Public Library as a community coordinator and became the Director of a Community Action Agency in New York City in 1966. Later on, in 1968 I became the Commissioner for the Community Development Agency, which was the CAA for New York City.

I read a few articles recently, magazine articles, about the war on poverty and they tell only a very tiny part of the story. I could be a part of telling a comprehensive and fair story, and I think it is a program that transformed the lives of many, many people in places like New York, especially in the black and Latino communities.

I made a habit of counting among the leadership, the civic and elected leaders, party leaders, in that city who come from the black and hispanic communities, counting the people who came out of the Community Action Program. The percentage is always above 75 percent of the leaders and the elected officials whose lives were touched by the Community Action Program and were transformed.

I am particularly pleased to welcome you today, Sargent Shriver. You have always been one of my heros.

STATEMENT OF SARGENT SHRIVER, PRESIDENT, SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. SHRIVER. Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I have submitted written testimony and I hope that some of you might have a chance to read it. Needless to say, I think it is pretty good.

This morning, it seemed to me, in view of the excellent testimony which has already been given by the VISTA volunteers who are here and by Senator Rockefeller, that rather than read my testimony, it will be worth more to you, I hope, to engage in a question and answer period rather than just reading a typewritten script that I have produced.

In connection with that approach, I would like to comment about a few things that have already been said here, especially by some Members of the Committee. I would like to start off with your comment about running Community Action in New York.

Nobody likes to talk about Community Action anymore. Community Action is something that everybody seems to be embarrassed about, but you are not, obviously; otherwise, you would not have talked about running it. I am not, inasmuch as I had something to do with getting it started.

Community action is essential to any victory at the community level; whether you call it community development or community

action doesn't make any difference. But, the only way the problems in the poverty area are going to be solved is when the community in that area get together to solve them themselves.

Sure, they need some outside help, but if the community cannot be mobilized to deal with its own problems, the chances of solving the problems in that community are relatively small. I, therefore, commend you and thank you for what you have done in community work in your great city up there of New York.

I would like to go on record and say that was an important, significant part of the effort to alleviate, if not eradicate, poverty in our country.

The second point I would like to make is this: When the war against poverty started, and VISTA was an integral part of it, the number of poor people in the United States was about 33 million. Believe it or not, we have got the same number today. It is a smaller proportion of the population because the population is larger.

The reality is that during the time that the so- called, much defamed war on poverty existed, the percentage of people in poverty went down drastically. It went from 17 percent down to eleven.

In these times of wild prosperity that we are all enjoying—at least most of us are enjoying—we have managed to raise the level of poverty back up to about 15 percent. That is something nobody seems to want to talk about very much, that is, the increase in poverty during this period of so- called prosperity.

During this period of economic expansion, when the United States has been enjoying the greatest, continuous economic revival in its history, the total number of people in poverty has gone up.

Now, VISTA, I think, should be looked upon in connection with that fact. The fact is that VISTA was an anti- poverty measure and unless it keeps that focus, I do not think it ever will do what it ought to do.

The next thing I want to talk about is the word, empower. I was very much interested to hear Congressman Bartlett use that word a little while ago. If he had used that word twenty years ago, we would have rid you out of town. You would have been called a revolutionary. You would have been one of the worst radicals in the Congress. You would have been called some kind of a bomb thrower.

All those words were used about people who talked about empowering the poor, but you have hit the nail right on the head, and that is, unless you give human dignity and power to people who are poor, they are not going to be able to solve their own problems.

It is all right for those of us a little bit better off to go in as volunteers to help them, but what we have to do is to help them gain their self-respect, to help them gain the ability to take care of their own problems, and that means that they have to be empowered. I use your word again.

A lot of people consider that a very, very revolutionary thing to say because it sounds as if you are taking power away from somebody else. That is not true. What you are actually doing is you are making them into full-fledged citizens of this nation rather than part of what is now called the underclass.

I have a son who tried to get into VISTA and wasn't successful. The recruiting program was not very active a couple of years ago,

so he has ended up working in the Cherry Hill section of Baltimore City, not far from here, as you know, and poverty is very great there. It is the worst in the State of Maryland, like Anacostia here.

In that community, there is no sense of anybody being empowered. Those are the areas where this great drug problem is getting worse and worse. We are talking about fighting a war against drugs, but you do not fight a war against drugs. Drugs are merely something that you can take or not take. It is external to a human being.

What you have to struggle for is empowerment of people, giving them the dignity and confidence and hope, which enables them not to use drugs. It is great to fight a war on drugs with policemen, but policemen cannot replace or give human hope to people. When there is no hope, then drugs become addictive; that is the only way out of the despair which people have, and it gets back to the word "empowerment" again.

I would just like to say that, to me, it is shocking to actually pick up the newspaper, this morning's newspaper, and see the Secretary of Treasury estimating that we are now going to have to spend $157.6 billion to bail out the S&Ls.

I think if you proposed putting $150 billion into a war against poverty, there isn't a single person in the Congress that would not have said that there is no such money. We can't spend money like that. Are you crazy? We don't have any money like that.

Somehow or another, $157.6 billion—it is right here on the front page of The New York Times—is going to be found to bail out S&Ls. I am not against bailing out S&Ls, but I am in favor of saying to myself and I think you all can say it to the country, that that exemplifies where we put our priorities.

We think it is all right to bail out the S&Ls. I do not disagree with that. We seem to be able to find the money to do it. We do not think that it is equally important to rescue 33 million people who are poverty stricken in this country, who are the center, to a large extent, of the drug problem in this country, the center of the crime problem, et cetera, driving up the number of people who are in prisons. We do not think it is worth spending $150 billion there.

In last year's budget, I think that VISTA was just at 25 million. If you were to propose to double that or triple it or quadruple it, which is what it ought to be, everybody would say, "Are you crazy? There's no money for that." There is never any money for a program like VISTA. It seems that way.

I have been very much encouraged, not just by the testimony we heard today, but by the fact that Republicans and Democrats on this Committee seem to be united in the belief that VISTA cannot be a victim of the budget crunch. That is where I think your biggest problem is going to be.

Judge Rosenbaum was saying here a few minutes ago, and I thought his testimony was wonderful, that young lawyers who come to work as his assistants there in the court, arrive there deeply in debt. Some of them owe, I think he said, sixty or seventy-five thousand dollars. They can't volunteer.

They can't volunteer because, in a sense, they are broke. One can say the United States itself is in that position now. We have got such a colossal debt, and I'm sure this will be told to you, that you

have got such a colossal debt you cannot possibly increase the money put into VISTA, just as those young lawyers are going to be stuck and they can't volunteer.

I think maybe the biggest battle is going to be with the House Budget Committee, not with us, and not even with the citizens. We have got a very tough problem, I believe. How can we possibly get the Budget Committee to double the size of VISTA or triple it or quadruple it?

No matter how eloquent the testimony on behalf of VISTA is, no matter how much it is needed as a national program, the way Jerry Rockefeller just testified, it seems to me we are going to run smack up against the problem that there is no money. We can't get the money in the budget.

So, I think the basic problem you are going to be confronted by is not whether VISTA is good or bad—we have heard eloquent testimony about that—not whether it is effective, not whether it needs to be national or local or both, but how can we afford it?

Consequently, although it is perhaps not the most encouraging thing to talk about, I think you have to talk about the cost-effectiveness of VISTA. I think you have to talk about what our priorities are. Are we going to continue to spend huge sums for national defense, almost unlimited sums, or are we going to take some of that money and direct it into human resource development programs like VISTA?

At the same time as we find out about the savings and loan situation on the front page, there is another interesting article on the front page today. This is the argument about inflation. If you look down to the forty-fifth or forty-sixth paragraph, you will see that energy prices, which dropped last year, are now already up eight tenths of a percent; that food prices have gone up seven-tenths a percent; that medical care has gone up eight-tenths of a percent; transportation costs are up seven-tenths a percent; and, education costs have jumped 1.6 percent.

I picked them out because those are the problems that face the poor: no money to pay to heat their house; too high a cost for food for themselves and their kids; rent up; higher medical costs; higher education costs. That is about the eighty-fifth paragraph here in the small print.

The poor who are with us today, as numerous as they were 25 years ago, are going to be hit by every one of those statistics. So, I do not think we have a poverty program which has been reduced; in fact, I think it has been increased.

I do not think we have a prosperity situation in the United States which we can point to with pride and think how great we are, with everybody so prosperous. I think we have a worse social situation in the United States than we had 25 years ago.

I think it is up to you people to call national attention to that. I think it is up to the people of the United States, under your leadership, to decide where to put their money. Do they want to continue to put money into defense, into bailing out the S&Ls, or into other matters that are not as human oriented as the war against poverty was or VISTA is, or are they going to put their money into human development?

So far as I am concerned, there is just no question about where the money ought to go. It ought to go into the lives and futures of human beings, not into the development of more and more sophisticated weapons for killing human beings.

I am very honored to be here with you. I must say when we started VISTA, I was not absolutely sure we would be existing 25 years later. I was not sure the Peace Corps would be existing 25 years later. I would like to go on record as saying that none of those programs would be in existence today if it weren't for the Congress of the United States.

I do not mean that you cooperated in it. I mean you kept them alive. The Congress did it, not the Executive Branch. I will repeat that. The Congress kept these programs alive and you deserve the credit, every one of you over here who has voted for them. Without you, we wouldn't have any of them.

I would like to stop now and say thank you. I thank you for what you have done. Thank you for holding these hearings. Thank you for the effort I think you will make to keep these programs alive and even to enlarge them in the future.

[The prepared statement of Sargent Shriver follows:]

A VISION OF VISTA

THE HONORABLE SARGENT SHRIVER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

FEBRUARY 23, 1989

THE VISION OF VISTA

Mr. Chairman:

For you and for me and for most of those in this room, poverty is not a condition of our lives. In fact, most of us have never had it so good. ~~Ronald Reagan's vision of a prosperous, caring America is a reality.~~ But just down the street, or around the corner or across the fields or in the heart of this and every City, poverty is an overwhelming fact of life. Daily life. Twenty-four hours a day without relief.

According to a recent report by Isabell Sawhill of the Urban Institute, poverty right now, today, is a fact in the lives of 14% of our society, or 33 million people. In fact, the United States has "one of the highest poverty rates in the industrialized world, especially among its children, but also among those who work part or all of the time". This is not something most of us see outside our windows every day. But it is there. It is there for old people. For parents who want to work and are working. And, especially, it is there for children. A child born in the United States today is two or three times as likely to be poor as one in Germany, Sweden, Norway or Canada. Eight percent of all our children spend 7 or more of their first ten years in poverty. For black children, the proportion is 34%. And these children of poverty will probably continue to experience poverty in adulthood.

I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that you are as appalled by these statistics as I was when I read Dr. Sawhill's report. I am sure that most Americans would be shocked and dismayed if they knew these facts. But poverty is not something people like to dwell on for very long. It's not a part of their lives, even if it is a part of the life of their country, of their community. Ronald Reagan, in fact, made a kind of joke of it. He said that we once "declared war on Poverty and Poverty won." That's a neat wise-crack. The trouble is, it isn't true. In 1964 we did declare war on poverty. And by the early 1970's we were winning. Then came the Nixon years. And the Reagan years. And the cut-backs. And the planned sabotage and destruction of the instruments of that war. The disbanding of the armies of that war. And, of course, poverty won. And it's still winning.

Let's look at some more facts. Let's look at the record, as Al Smith used to say. In 1965, when the opening salvos of our nationally declared war on poverty were fired, there were 33 million poor people in America, 17.3% of the population. By 1973, that proportion had dropped to 11.1 percent. Not by accident. But because the concentration of national resources and the focus of national will on the elimination of poverty was beginning to take effect. Then, as this great national effort was dismantled, the incidence of poverty inevitably rose until by the mid 1980's it was back up to 15% -- almost where it was in 1965. And this happened in the midst of the most prolonged era of prosperity in our century. Mr. Chairman, I think we all will agree that this is intolerable. And I think it is tremendously significant that one of the first things Jack Kemp, our new Secretary of HUD said when he was nominated by President Bush was, "We are going to start a new war on Poverty."

3.

There are two ways of fighting a war. Through a universal draft. Or with a volunteer army. I think we can all agree that America does its fighting best on every front when it does it with volunteers. When Alexander de Toqueville came to America in the 1830's, he was struck even then by what he called "habits of the heart," the way Americans instinctively rallied together to solve problems, whether to help a neighbor raise a barn or to man a soup kitchen to feed the poor. We are a nation of volunteers. We started out that way. We're still that way. And if we think its descriptive to refer to volunteers as points of light, there are not a thousand of them. There are millions of them. Millions who are waiting to join up. And millions who would volunteer if they only knew where to go and what to do. In today's Washington Post, Bill Raspberry quotes a young woman who says, "The problem is young people are not informed about the opportunities for helping. It doesn't happen in the schools, and there's not enough effort coming from their homes, their churches, or their temples."

Twenty-five years ago, when we pledged as a nation to "eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, by opening to everyone the opportunity to work and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity", we recognized the power of these "habits of the heart" and the need to harness the energies of volunteerism for the great battles ahead.

In proposing VISTA, Volunteers In Service To America, Congress wrote these words into the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, our Declaration of War Against Poverty: "...a nationally sponsored program for full-time volunteer service will afford an effective means of stimulating greater volunteer activities at all levels...will encourage more men and women to pursue the helping professions as a career and will make material contributions...toward the elimination of the causes and effects of poverty".

4.

For twenty-five years, this is precisely what VISTA and its volunteers have sought to accomplish. It's true -- they haven't been very visible. They haven't made headlines. I will wager that most Americans don't even know they exist. And do you know why? For two reasons. First, because these volunteers work and live where poverty is the greatest. On the mean streets of our cities; in rural pockets of poverty where the people and the media rarely go. Second, because after years of struggling to close down and dismantle VISTA, there is no longer a national recruiting effort; no longer any national advertising of the program. Today, if you want to enlist in VISTA, you have to make all the moves. And even when you do, chances are that you won't be sent anywhere but into the poverty of your own neighborhood.

When he got out of College, my son, Mark, tried to join VISTA. He couldn't get in. He spent weeks trying to find out where to go. And when he did locate an office, no one was there. Today, you need the skills of a Houdini to find out that there is such a program as VISTA, and then, when you get out of that straitjacket, there's no one around to applaud.

And so, from a volunteer effort against poverty that was designed to harness the energy and idealism of youth, VISTA now is a program in which the average age of its volunteers is 40, and of those volunteers, 70% are women, most of whom are clients of other anti-poverty efforts. Don't get me wrong. I think it's a marvelous thing to give poor people themselves a chance to join the fight against poverty -- in fact that has been one of the great strengths of Head Start. But to snuff out thousands of points of light -- even before they have a chance to shine -- is, to my mind, a national disgrace.

It is doubly a disgrace because today, right now, we are seeing a resurgence of a call for volunteer service among our youth. There are at least eight bills in the hopper calling for some sort of voluntary national service, ranging from the president's YOUTH ENGAGED IN SERVICE (YES) to proposals for a CITIZENS CORPS, which would reward civilian or military service with vouchers to be used by volunteers for their education or for buying a home. In fact, the sounds of these new calls for volunteer service have become so loud that even U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, certainly not one of our more radical news magazines, featured "The Push For Voluntary National Service" as its February 13 Cover Story.

And so, Mr. Chairman, in the midst of a resurgence of poverty in the United States and in the midst of a new call for increased volunteer service on the part of the President and both political parties, VISTA, our greatest, most cost-effective domestic volunteer program; our only national volunteer effort focused on our most grievous national problem, languishes. It makes no sense. It must not be permitted to happen. And this year, the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of its founding, is the right time and this is the right Congress to bring VISTA to full, active life once again.

This is not a partisan effort, Mr. Chairman. There are strong Republicans, like former HUD Secretary, George Romney, and former head of VISTA, Carol Khosrovi Marshall who are proud to call themselves "Friends of VISTA". There are over 100,000 former VISTA volunteers of every age, every political persuasion, whose service in VISTA has enhanced their contributions to our society. There is already in place a VISTA Literacy Corps, dedicated to helping solve one of the problems this Administration has already declared to be a priority concern. Yet this

same Administration has requested zero funding for the coming fiscal year.

This, too, makes no sense. With troops already in the field; with 2000 points of light already blazing, are we going to turn them out, and build a whole new generator plant, a whole new bureaucracy, to do exactly the same thing?

Ten years ago, VISTA had almost 5000 volunteers in the field and a budget of $34 million. This fiscal year, there are only 2000 volunteers and a budget of just $24 million including the VISTA Literacy Corps. Fewer people. Fewer dollars. A weakened effort. A loss of national commitment at a time when poverty is more intractible than ever. When the need for volunteers in our poverty areas is greatest. Not volunteers who come in for a day and then go back to the green lawns of suburbia. But volunteers who, for at least a year, will live and work among those who need them most: the homeless sleeping in our streets; the babies of AIDS victims who lie in hospital wards; the teen-age mothers struggling to create a decent life for their children; the drug addicts trying to stay clean. This is where volunteers are needed. This is where VISTA has always been. Why reinvent the wheel when we have a road-tested, proven vehicle already on the scene. I think all these new efforts are commendable. One of them, in fact, has been introduced by my brother-in-law, Senator Kennedy. I think very highly of his program. And I think highly of the volunteer proposal of Senator Dodd, a former Peace Corps Volunteer. But I believe it would be impractical, wasteful, even immoral if we failed to give VISTA a chance to live and grow and accomplish the mission against poverty that it was organized twenty-five years ago to carry out.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I think back to a day five years ago, when we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of VISTA. It was a very hot day and hundreds of Friends of VISTA were crowded into a stuffy tent. They were straining to hear the hoarse and weakened voice of a man who sat before them, -- in a wheel chair -- struggling for breath. This man was one of our greatest statesman. A distinguished republican Senator. Jacob Javits. He had asked to speak to this group -- one of his last appearances before his death -- because he wanted to tell them how much service in VISTA had meant to his daughter. And how much, through thousands of people like his daughter, young and old, it had meant to America.

Today, on this twenty-fifth Anniversary of VISTA, I can only repeat to you the deep emotional, intellectual conviction of this great man. VISTA must live. VISTA must grow. VISTA has become one of our most precious "habits of the heart." Happy Birthday VISTA, and many, many happy returns of the day.

Thank you.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Shriver.
Ms. Alvarado.

STATEMENT OF DONNA M. ALVARADO, DIRECTOR, ACTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ms. ALVARADO. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this 25th anniversary year of VISTA.

This is a time to not only reflect on and honor the accomplishments of the nearly 100,000 Americans who have served as VISTA volunteers and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their dedication and hard work, but it is also a time to reaffirm the goals and the direction of the vital public/private partnership effort that the VISTA Program now exemplifies.

I welcome the opportunity to share the platform with the distinguished Sargent Shriver, an eminent statesman who has dedicated his life to public service and who has left his mark on our nation through his many positive accomplishments. His name still echoes affectionately through the halls of ACTION.

Sarge and I come from different sides of the political aisle, and we may disagree on statistics and ideological contributions of various administrations; however, we share a common goal which is stronger and more profound than these differences, and that is the goal of fostering the dignity and independence of our most disadvantaged Americans.

VISTA has endured because it works for the communities it serves and because of the indomitable dedication and sacrifice of our volunteers. As I have visited our VISTA projects throughout the country during my tenure as the ACTION Director, I can tell you that I come back, every time, humbled by the dedication and the sacrifice of these volunteers.

I ask the Committee and others who are supporting our VISTA Program to take this opportunity of the 25th anniversary of VISTA to build on our commonalities, to work together to create a new era for VISTA, where we can depoliticize and strive forward with our common resources, talents and dedication to create a program that will work best for the communities that it serves in a bipartisan nature.

I would also like to indicate for the record that we have several individuals who have labored many years, on behalf of VISTA, at the ACTION Agency on the VISTA staff and, in some cases, more recently. We have Jane Kenny, who is currently the Deputy Director of the Agency, who has done a wonderful job in directing the VISTA Program during the past two years, and Nancy Yde, our Director of Public Affairs, who will have an integral role in publicizing the 25th anniversary of VISTA in this coming year. And I am pleased to present our small but elite cadre of VISTA staff, Diana London, the Chief of the VISTA Branch, Tom Harmon, Audrey Thomas, Eddie Wood, Alice Burke, Jean Davis, Nancy Phillips and Jean Pimble. They form a partnership with the volunteers across the country in making this program work.

To commemorate the anniversary, a special committee is being assembled to be part of the recognition activities. A public affairs

office has proposed activities to mark the occasion, including recommendations to hold special celebrations at the three original VISTA project sites, an employee open house, feature stories for the media for a 25- week period, and various options for other state and national observances, including posters and brochures to be disseminated nationwide.

VISTA is the oldest program of ACTION, created as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Its legislative mission then, as it remains today, is to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty in the United States by encouraging and enabling persons from all walks of life to perform meaningful and constructive service as volunteers.

This philosophy springs from the principle of citizen participation, which is the underpinning of our democracy. We have a saying in the Hispanic community that very much exemplifies that concept—"si se puede se debe." If you have the right, you have the responsibility. Congressman Martinez, I am very proud to report to you that our latest poll of our VISTA volunteers indicates that we now have fourteen percent Hispanic volunteers serving in VISTA as of December 1988, 25 percent black volunteers, 53 percent white, four percent Native American and four percent Asian-American.

The volunteers now, as then, serve full-time for one year under the direction of local public or nonprofit sponsoring agencies. They live within the low-income communities they serve. They receive a monthly subsistence allowance and a modest stipend at the end of service. The goal of their service is to help needy Americans achieve a measure of self-reliance and the ability to live in decency and with dignity.

I have listened to various comments regarding the aspect of national volunteers versus local volunteers, and I do not think that it should be a versus situation. I have visited so many of our projects and I have seen that volunteers from the local community do bring something very special to their service, not the least of which is the knowledge of the community and the commitment and the message that they impart to other persons who have lost hope that it is possible to achieve their dreams and their aspirations and that the American dream can become a reality for them.

I caution the subcommittee, as you look at the proposals to have a particular set-aside for national volunteers or people who are recent college graduates, while it is important to ensure that we do have participation from individuals from all walks of life, that we not fall into the trap—nobody really wants to talk about this, but I think I should put it on the table—that it is only those who are well educated and those who have had the opportunity to go to college who in this country we know are predominantly white and middle class, who can go into low-income communities which, in this country, happen to be predominantly minority and "solve their problems for them."

I know that is certainly not the intention of this subcommittee or those who advocate even having specific quotas for certain groups of Americans within the VISTA Program, but I do think it is my obligation to point that out and to make that clear.

VISTA has come a long way since its first thirteen volunteers, ranging in age from twenty to 81, entered a training program in

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in January of 1965. Today, VISTA volunteers serve in every State of the Union as well as in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

VISTA volunteers are recruited for the commitment, skills and experience they bring to their work. Throughout its history, VISTA has attracted volunteers from all walks of life and geographical areas, all age groups, including low-income individuals and older Americans.

VISTA volunteers, with empathy and understanding, have worked side by side with involved community leaders, often achieving more in a year than their sponsoring agencies had been able to do in nearly a decade.

In West Virginia, for example, it is best described in the eloquent words of Jean Ambrose, the project director of a former VISTA sponsor, the Literacy Volunteers of West Virginia. I am sure that Senator Rockefeller has met her and is aware of her work.

She says, "If you had told me back in 1982 that only six years later, there would be trained tutors ready to help adult non-readers in virtually every county, I wouldn't have believed it. There is no way I could have responded to that interest. There is no way we would have had the funds to hire staff. VISTA enabled us to seize the golden opportunity of a rising tide of public awareness about the rampant functional illiteracy existing in our society. Today, anyone would be proud to claim us as a success story.

We have institutionalized Literacy Volunteers at the grass roots level. Some of our programs are VISTA sponsors themselves now. Many of them are taking the program into the schools to help prevent children from becoming illiterate adults.

All are firmly rooted in their communities and are economically self-sufficient, not having become dependent on the VISTA volunteers who did the hard community organizing work at the beginning. I believe our partnership with VISTA exemplifies what can happen when you help people help themselves."

Another example is the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association, CAMBA, in Brooklyn. VISTA volunteers deal with the needs of the homeless and newly-arrived refugees in North Flatbush. Since the start of the project in February 1988, VISTA volunteers' outreach efforts have resulted in the enrollment of homeless mothers in parenting skills workshops and GED equivalency classes. Children of homeless families have also attended a ten-week summer camp sponsored by CAMBA. Two hundred immigrants have also been enrolled in ESL classes and an after school youth program has been established for refugee students.

Today's VISTA volunteers are addressing the most basic challenges facing low-income Americans: hunger; homelessness; illiteracy; unemployment; physical and chemical abuse; and, the needs of young people at risk.

The Women in Action VISTA Project in Houston, Texas, which was recently visited by Congressman Bartlett, addresses the problems of unemployment faced by teenage parents. Goals include development of a core curriculum for academic skill enhancement for drop-outs in the East End of Houston and the establishment of a Job Finders Advisory Council to aid teen mothers and fathers in finding permanent jobs in the workforce. VISTA volunteers will be

contacting employers to encourage increased numbers of part-time or shared jobs to allow teen parents to continue in school or in GED classes.

Mr. Chairman, the VISTA Program is responding to the needs identified by the low-income communities themselves. Community self-help and citizen participation may have started out as ideals. We now know that they are practical necessities.

We found out that our most valuable resources in meeting the challenges of hunger, illiteracy, drug and crime prevention and public housing, are the people and the resources in the local communities and neighborhoods. I cannot overemphasize the power, the resources, the talent and the energy, the positive side of the equation, that does, in fact, exist in these communities and simply needs to be unleashed.

Mobilizing resources to build or expand a program ensures that a volunteer's term isn't just a one-time effort. It has a multiplier effect, leaving behind permanent structures that will continue to facilitate self-sufficiency among the poor. It has a life-long impact on the volunteers, professionally, personally and spiritually.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, we have every confidence that the VISTA Program will build upon the best of the past while continuing to respond to emerging needs. To respond to those emerging needs, I am pleased to officially announce today that Patricia A. E. Rogers will become the new Director of VISTA, effective March 13, 1989.

She comes to ACTION from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she has served as a special assistant to the Executive Director of the Inter-Agency Council on the Homeless. Prior to her work there, she was a social worker for the Capitol Hill Hospital where she counseled hospital patients and their families in crisis in the Intensive Care Unit.

Ms. Rogers also served as the senior staff advisor on vocational and adult education policy issues in her capacity as special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

She has also taught at St. John's College Middle School where she organized and sponsored the student literary magazine. Her background in education includes a master of social worker, a master of arts in adult education and a bachelor of arts degree in English.

It is this strong educational, governmental and social work background which are integral parts of the VISTA Program that she will use to lead this program into its next quarter of a century. It is our hope that in the next 25 years, in the words of President Bush, "citizen service will become a real and living part of every American life. Citizenship and the idea of giving something back will again be recognized as essential elements in a life well-lived."

This is the spirit that will guide VISTA on its future mission as we continue to demonstrate that the commitment to serve others is still very much a part of the American character, the American tapestry.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Donna M. Alvarado follows:]

Statement of ACTION Director Donna M. Alvarado
on the VISTA 25th Anniversary
Before the House Subcommittee on Select Education
February 23, 1989

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this the 25th Anniversary year of VISTA. This is a time to not only reflect on and honor the accomplishments of the nearly 100,000 individuals who have served as VISTA Volunteers, and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for their dedication and hard work, but it is also a time to reaffirm the goals and direction of the vital public/private partnership effort the VISTA program now exemplifies.

As Members of this committee are well aware, since its inception and as it enters a second quarter century, the concept underlying VISTA derives from 200 years of American tradition of volunteerism and community involvement in service to those in need. VISTA--Volunteers in Service to America--is the oldest program of ACTION, created as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Its legislative mission then, as it remains today, is to "strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty...in the United States by encouraging and enabling persons from all walks of life...to perform meaningful and constructive service as Volunteers..."

The Volunteers then, as now, serve full-time for one year under the direction of local public or non-profit sponsoring agencies. They live within the low-income communities they serve and receive a monthly subsistence allowance and a modest stipend at the end of service. The goal of their service is to help needy Americans achieve a measure of self-reliance and the ability to live in decency and with dignity.

VISTA has come a long way since its first thirteen Volunteers, ranging in age from 20-81, entered a training program in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in January, 1965. Today VISTA Volunteers serve in every state of the Union as well as in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. VISTA Volunteers are recruited for the commitment, skills and experience they bring to their work. Throughout its history, VISTA has attracted Volunteers from all walks of life, all geographical areas, and all age groups, including low-income individuals and older Americans. VISTA Volunteers with training, empathy and understanding have worked side-by-side with involved community leaders, often achieving more in a year than their sponsoring agencies had been able to do in nearly a decade. In West Virginia, for example, it is best described in the eloquent words of Jean Ambrose, the project director of a former VISTA sponsor--the Literacy Volunteers of West Virginia. "If you had told me back in 1982 that only six years later there would be trained tutors ready to help adult non-readers in virtually every county, I wouldn't have believed it. There is no way I could have responded to

that interest, there was no way we would have had the funds to hire staff. VISTA enabled us to seize the golden opportunity of a rising tide of public awareness about the rampant functional illiteracy existing in our society. Today, anyone anyone would be proud to claim us as a success story.

I would also add that our budget grew from $30,000 in 1982 to more than $100,000 in 1986, which coincided with the year we had the most VISTA Volunteers with us. This year our budget is $90,000 and we are almost entirely supporting ourselves through sources other than state government.

...We have institutionalized Literacy Volunteers at the grass roots level. Some of our programs are VISTA sponsors themselves, now. Many are taking the program into the schools, to help prevent children from becoming illiterate adults. All are firmly rooted in their communities and are economically self-sufficient, not having become dependent on the VISTA Volunteers who did the hard community organizing work at the beginning.

I believe our partnership with VISTA exemplifies what can happen when you help people help themselves."

Such successes as the Literacy Volunteers of West Virgiinia are examples of community-based problem-solving, the basis of the VISTA

program. The VISTA program today, as it begins its twenty-fifth year, is proud and strong. Our Volunteers are addressing the most basic challenges facing low-income Americans--hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, unemployment, physical and chemical abuse, and the needs of young people at risk.

For example, at the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA) in Brooklyn, VISTA Volunteers deal with the needs of the homeless and newly-arrived refugees in North Flatbush. Since the start of the project in February 1988, VISTA Volunteers' outreach efforts have resulted in the enrollment of homeless mothers in parenting skills workshops and GED equivalency classes. Children of homeless families have also attended a ten-week summer camp sponsored by CAMBA. Two hundred immigrants have been enrolled in ESL classes, and an after school youth program has been established for refugee students.

At the Women in Action in Houston, Texas, recently visited by Congressman Bartlett, the VISTA project deals with the problems of unemployment faced by teenage parents. The VISTA project, begun in July 1988, is developing a core curriculum for academic skill enhancement for dropouts in the East End of Houston. It is also establishing a Job Finders Advisory

Council to aid teen mothers and fathers find permanent jobs in the work force. VISTA Volunteers' will be contacting employers to encourage increased numbers of part-time or shared jobs to allow teen parents to continue in school or in GED classes.

The VISTA program is responding to the needs identified by low-income communities. Community self-help and citizen participation may have started out as ideals; we now know that they are practical necessities. We found out that our most valuable resources in meeting the challenges of hunger, illiteracy, drug and crime prevention, and public housing are the people and the resources in local communities and neighborhoods. Mobilizing resources to build or expand a program ensures that a Volunteer's term isn't just a one-time effort; it has a multiplier effect -- leaving behind permanent structures that will continue to facilitate self-sufficiency among the poor.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, we hope and expect that the VISTA program will build upon the best of the past while continuing to respond to emerging needs.

It is our hope that in the next 25 years, in the words of President Bush "...citizen service will become a real and living part of <u>every</u> American life. Citizenship and the idea of giving something back will again be recognized as essential elements in a life well-lived."

This is the spirit that guides VISTA on its future missions, as we continue to demonstrate that the commitment to serve others is still very much a part of the American character--the American tapestry.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Ms. Alvarado. We appreciate your announcement. We would like to take this opportunity to salute your performance. I find you very cooperative and congratulate you on having done a very good job in a very difficult environment.

Ms. ALVARADO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. I would like to open the questions with a question to Sargent Shriver. We've had a great deal of discussion and pretty soon, there will be a great debate about the proposals for a National Youth Service here in Washington.

Some are quite sweeping, like Senator Nunn's proposal called YES. I would like to know what you, as the founder of both the Peace Corps and VISTA, think of these present proposals for youth service.

Mr. SHRIVER. Truthfully, I have not studied them. There are a lot of them. There must be six or eight or ten bills already introduced in the Senate and the House. I have not had the time, actually, to study those; I have been working on other matters.

I am delighted that there seems to be a bipartisan surge of interest in the whole question of national service by volunteers, but I would regret it if it turned out that in the process of developing new programs, that existing programs, which are successful and proven, are forgotten or are brushed out of the way.

I cannot help but think that VISTA has the experience and the budget and the quality of personnel in it to be an important part of any national voluntary program. So, I am not sure whether the President has proposed an additional program or whether VISTA would be part of that program or whether VISTA would be in addition to that program. I am not sure about the other proposals.

Chairman OWENS. VISTA is never mentioned when these proposals are floated. You started from scratch. Are you saying that you think they have a good base to start and build on in VISTA?

Mr. SHRIVER. There is no question about that. VISTA has got the experience, it has got the structure, it has got the people. Why reinvent the wheel? I think it is wonderful that everybody seems to be suddenly interested in volunteers and service to America.

Some of the bills even have wordplays on that very name. They talk about volunteers. They talk about service to America, et cetera. Well, they've already got it in VISTA. So, as I say, I don't see there is any point to reinventing the wheel.

Unless somebody has got something constructive to add to what VISTA's mission is, I do not see the need for new legislation. I see the need for greatly strengthening, as I have already indicated, VISTA. I think there is a great need to make it a national program so that people can be recruited into it nationally and people can learn about its existence nationally.

This is not because I think the national government is the solution to these problems. I don't think so at all, but I think that the visibility of it could be greatly increased by making it a national program once again rather than a program that has to rely almost wholly on local efforts.

Chairman OWENS. Ms. Alvarado, could you perhaps tell us more about the President's proposal, the YES proposal? Are you familiar with the proposal?

Ms. ALVARADO. Mr. Chairman, the President has demonstrated, on numerous occasions, a strong personal commitment to the concept of public service and citizen participation.

As evidence of that, he has created an office within the White House itself, the Office of National Service which is headed by Mr. Gregg Petersmeyer, who is working at this time in developing the specific parameters of the Youth Engaged in Service to America program.

At this time I do not have the details. I do know that the plan is being put into detailed format, and we are looking forward to working together with the White House as this ensues, but I cannot comment specifically on the proposal.

Chairman OWENS. Did I hear you say in your testimony that there were some activities that were being planned to remind this administration that VISTA does exist? The whole Washington city administration ought to be reminded.

Ms. ALVARADO. The administration is very much aware that the program does exist, as we will elaborate when we have the opportunity in the March 8 reauthorization hearing. We will be happy to go into the details of our proposals and welcome your comments.

The plans are getting started within the agency—are in development within the agency now—not only to publicize our VISTA program within the administration and within Washington, but nationwide.

We agree that it is an important opportunity to provide more national visibility for the VISTA program, and we look forward to doing so.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you. Mr. Bartlett?

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I learned a great deal from my visit with some VISTA volunteers in Houston and in Dallas. In fact, I visited with VISTA volunteers about the results of VISTA projects through the years.

Ms. Alvarado, let me begin with a question for you. During your tenure as the Director of Action, what would you describe as your single greatest accomplishment at VISTA?

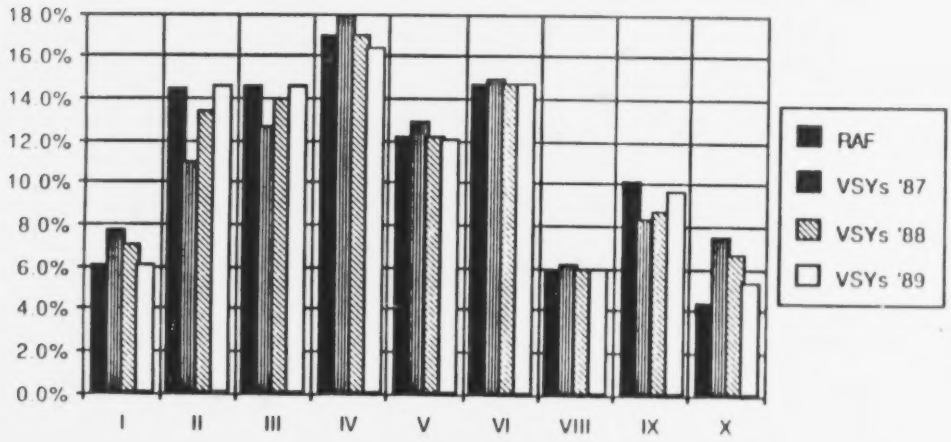
Ms. ALVARADO. I would describe it, Congressman Bartlett, as something which may sound very mundane. It certainly is not going to be up in big lights in the national press.

It is very simple, but I think it goes to the heart of the VISTA mission, which is why I am proud of it. That is the fact that our most significant accomplishment among the many accomplishments has been the reallocation of our resources to coincide with the areas of the country where the poverty rates are the highest.

This was not the case several years ago and we have been working over a three-year period to bring the allocation into alignment.

As the VISTA reallocation chart, which I would like to provide to the Committee for the record, illustrates, in 1987 certain areas of the country such as Region II, which covers New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico, were seriously under-represented in relation to their poverty statistics.

VISTA RESOURCE ALLOCATION FORMULA (RAF) IN COMPARISON TO
ACTUAL ALLOCATIONS OF VSY'S FOR FY 87, FY 88 AND FY 89



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After a concerted effort by both the ACTION headquarters and field staff, we are confident that by the end of fiscal year 1989 we will meet our goal of having distribution of all regional VISTA resources within one percent of our allocation goals, which are based primarily on poverty statistics provided by the U.S. Census.

In the New York region, for example, that has meant an increase from 265 volunteer service years in 1987 to 380 volunteer service years in 1989. This effort has made a significant impact on the agency's ability to insure that the VISTA resources are distributed in an equitable manner and are reaching those who are in greatest need.

Mr. BARTLETT. Mr. Shriver, I appreciate your compliments. I do take it as a compliment to be described as a revolutionary. I was twenty years ago and am today.

Mr. SHRIVER. I meant it as a compliment.

Mr. BARTLETT. I took it that way. I appreciate it, from one fellow revolutionary to another.

I tell you what I am troubled about and was troubled twenty years ago and am more troubled today. It is probably summed up in the comments that Lyndon Johnson made when he initiated the war on poverty.

You also commented in your testimony that even that term has been trivialized and made into all manner of light humor. It is not humorous.

He said that many of those in society live on the outskirts of hope—some because of race, some because of poverty and many because of both.

It is our task, said Lyndon Johnson in 1968, to replace their despair with opportunity, noble words which seem to me to give the same or even added mandate today as then.

The goal is not to replace their despair with the same despair, but slightly more money. In fact, the goal remains the same, to replace their despair with opportunity.

That leads me to my question. It is my hope that over the course of the next year or so, as the national debate, I hope, begins, that the political leadership on both sides—my question would be, do you think we collectively have sufficient maturity in our political leadership to take that revolution head on and to convert our thinking about the system of transfer payments which initiated largely in the 1960s and remains intact today—convert that thinking into revolutionary thinking about how to empower poor people to not be poor any more?

How do we convert public housing into home ownership opportunities for all income strata or for subsidized tenants, to allow them to choose their own place to live, and not the government's choice of where they live, or to repeal or to modify the prevailing wage, which locks low income workers out of jobs?

How do we allow parents to take an issue that has been controversial and should not be, to take the remedial reading—the federal government says, "We want to provide remedial education to low income students through Chapter I," but the parents cannot decide what school to obtain that remedial education from in order to increase dramatically the take-home pay through an expansion of earned income tax credit.

How do we help neighbors organize in their own neighborhood to kick out the drug dealers using police and court and other kind of resources.

So my question is, do we have at this point in our nation's history—with a kinder, gentler nation led by our president—do we have the political leadership on all sides of the spectrum to really wrestle with those issues?

Mr. SHRIVER. The truth of the matter is that you know more about that than I do, whether you have the necessary political leadership.

The most that I can say in answer to your question is simply this.

The office we started with was called the Office of Economic Opportunity. We sweated over that name. It was not something sent down by Lyndon Johnson or up from the United States Senate or the House—the name, I am talking about.

I am glad that you picked out the word "opportunity," because that was a vital part of that legislation. Under that legislation, I might add, there were no transfer payments at all. There were no handouts—period, zero, no handouts. Nobody got anything for nothing. They had to work for it.

If they were a VISTA volunteer they had to volunteer to join VISTA. If they were in the Job Corps they had to volunteer to get into the Job Corps. I'll tell you, that was a wait for a lot of people.

To volunteer to join something and go from a small town in Georgia to some camp out in Montana—that is a wrench. It was very difficult.

So every program in the Office of Economic Opportunity was an opportunity program. It was also something you had to volunteer for. There were no handouts.

The transfer payments which you talk about actually started to take place in the 1970s, not the 1960s. There have always been some transfer payments—I mean, going back forty or fifty years. However, the big increase to which you referred, I believe, historically occurred in the 1970s, not the 1960s, and they are not part of the so-called war against poverty, the much maligned so-called war against poverty.

I am not an expert on transfer payments. I am, I believe, an expert in opportunity. I think that is what the poor want and that is what they are capable of responding to.

I think that there is no question about the fact that people who have worked a lot in the slums know that the people there themselves have got many, many times better solutions to their problems that experts from abroad—experts from outside. It is almost an hallucination to think that there are a lot of people in Washington, or anywhere else, who are rich and know how to help the poor in detail.

I can remember one of my friends, now deceased, the famous mayor of Chicago, Richard J. Daley, saying—I think he said it to Lyndon Johnson, as a matter of fact, and he certainly said it to me—he said, "This whole idea of opportunity, Sargent, is crazy—if the poor knew how to get out of poverty they would not be poor."

He said that the idea of empowering people who are in the slums to come up with their own solutions to their own problems was to him an absolute canard. It could not work.

I disagree with him profoundly in that. I think we not only found out that it was wrong—his idea was wrong—inside the United States in poverty-stricken areas. It is wrong overseas.

Whenever we send Peace Corps volunteers to Peru or someplace, we do not go down there trying to tell them how to solve their problems. We try to work with them to come up with Peruvian solutions to their problems. We call that in the Peace Corps community development, and it is the same thing in community action. It is empowering people to solve their own problems.

I agree with you completely in what you have said, but I do not have any answer to the broader question you posed.

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Martinez?

Mr. MARTINEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think it is interesting that both of you are in concert regarding the need for community involvement, because that is where the problem is and they are the people who can understand better how to resolve their problems.

I want to relate a little joke here. I first heard it about an Indian agent going to a reservation and making all of these promises and smoking a peace pipe on it, and it all related back to my own experiences in my own community.

Instead of an Indian agent it was usually a politician who came into our community, who promises the world in every political speech, with all the things he was going to do for our community, and encourages us to vote for him.

Like the Indian agent, who went from the gathering and making the promises to the tepee to smoke the peace pipe, in our community after an election, there was a celebration which we attended with the victor, because we were hopeful that he was going to fulfill all of his promises.

During the speech that the Indian agent was making, the Indians kept shouting out a word—we will just use the word "hoya, hoya"—every time he made a promise.

Well, in my neighborhood every time a politician made a promise he might have heard the same word—"hoya, hoya."

Then on the way to the tepee to smoke the pipe the Indian chief turned to the agent and said, "You be careful you don't step in that hoya."

We could say the same thing in our case, as well.

One of the ways we empower people to control their own destiny is to elect people or appoint people to political positions with a decision-making ability.

Only recently have we started to be successful. In the community where I live—and I use my own community for an example—for something like 25 years the community was 47 percent Hispanic. We had no Hispanics sitting on the city council. I was the first elected to the city council.

I was elected, not with the total support of that Hispanic community, but with the support of the non-Hispanic community, because I convinced them that I was as red-white-and-blue American as

they were, and that my concerns were for the total community. We were successful.

In the assembly seat where I defeated the incumbent, it was the same thing. Fifty-three percent were Hispanic. And for as long as I can remember, since I was a child in that valley in 1929, there had always been a non-Hispanic representing the Hispanic community.

That is part of your control of their destinies. Who is going to make the decisions? We have not always elected the best person from the Hispanic community. Sometimes those people have tragically sold out to the power structure.

Fortunately, through education, our younger Hispanics and younger blacks are becoming more in tune with what the power structure is about and how to use that power for their community. And we are electing better people and getting better people appointed to positions of decision making, so that we are benefiting.

It has taken a while and is going to take a lot longer. In that regard, you spoke about hope. A lot of times we did not have alternatives—we had choices. We were making choices——

Mr. SHRIVER. That is right.

Mr. MARTINEZ. [continuing] in too many instances we are making bad choices, and those alternatives have not been provided for those communities.

VISTA is one way to do it.

Mr. SHRIVER. Right.

Mr. MARTINEZ. The thing that I like about VISTA is that you take people who are graduates from a college, who are white, middle-class, and leaders in their community—they gain more experience from the involvement than does the local community.

The real support for the community comes from the community itself. We heard Senator Rockefeller talk about how it took him six months to break the ice and to gain the confidence of that community.

This happens all the time. It is beginning to involve more and more people from the community. You say we have increased from six percent to 14 percent. But when you consider that ninety percent of the volunteers are recruited from those communities, I do not think that that is really a statistic that we can really be proud of.

It is good that we are gaining, but we need to do better. We need to gain more people than that.

In that regard, let me mention one more thing. You mentioned the priorities that we have such as defense and bailing out the savings and loans. There is one other big expense that we don't mention in terms of what VISTA does and keeps from happening and creating greater social problems for us. That is the idea of incarceration and what it costs to incarcerate.

Mr. SHRIVER. Yes.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Do you realize the money it takes nationally to incarcerate people? One year of incarceration is ten times the amount it would take to be able to educate a person. It is vastly more cost effective to educate a person and motivate them than to incarcerate a person.

Mr. SHRIVER. Amen.

Mr. MARTINEZ. In that regard, what I would like to say is that illiteracy is the big problem and one of my major concerns.

The debate that is going to take place is whether you should lump literacy work in or keep it separate. Maybe I am paranoid, but I am concerned that a democracy only flourishes because there are truly educated people to run it.

We need to educate those people in those neighborhoods who are not educated, who are illiterate, because that is going to empower them.

I see a crying need not for lumping the money together, but for expanding the authorization and the appropriation for it—and for making programs that are successful, like the one in San Jose, more accessible in these areas that do not have the most successful programs.

I am really concerned about it. I ask, as the Director of Action, could you support the idea of a national clearing house for literacy?

Ms. ALVARADO. Congressman Martinez, I have not had the opportunity to review the specific proposal.

I will tell you that I share your strong commitment and belief that one of the most important single root causes of poverty is, in fact, illiteracy and that it must be a primary and paramount goal of the ACTION Agency, throughout our programs, to ensure that our local communities have the opportunity to build strong literacy efforts.

If that involves sharing information on successful approaches that have been taken in other communities, then that is certainly an approach that can be very beneficial.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Ms. Alvarado, there not really a proposal on the table. What I am looking for is direction and guidance, because I would like to make such a proposal and I would like to know that there is going to be support for it.

It is difficult to convince any of the 535 members of Congress that an idea is good if it did not come from them personally. So we need to find the people who are working in those areas, the people who really make programs work. You are working in Action, and so you are supportive of it.

I really believe that there is a crying need right now for a national clearing house on literacy programs.

Ms. ALVARADO. Certainly the concept of building a united coalition of individuals who are involved in literacy efforts is an approach that we have favored within our agency. We have also favored that within the area of substance abuse prevention.

Because there are so many federal, state and local programs which have proliferated through the years to address illiteracy, to address drug abuse prevention, to address teenage pregnancy, it is beneficial to call all the players in and give them an opportunity to share information as to what is happening in the different fields of the battle, so to speak, so that people do not duplicate their efforts and so that the scarce resources that are available can be best utilized across the board.

Hopefully the end result would be a minimizing of the turf battles which, in my view, have really presented barriers in winning the war against illiteracy or against drugs and poverty.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Let me ask you this question. What technical assistance is available right now to the new organizations that want to set up literacy programs?

Is there any technical assistance available through your offices?

Ms. ALVARADO. We have provided training to our ACTION state staff. As you know, we have staff offices located in every state. They are the front line in terms of providing technical assistance to community-based organizations, whether they are receiving ACTION grants or not.

Unfortunately, the program support resources within the ACTION budget have been greatly diminished during the past several years. Although in actual dollars they have remained constant, due to uncontrollable increases in expenses within program support that we have had to absorb, such as pay increases, rents, and so forth, we do not have all of our critical vacancies filled. So the technical assistance that we could provide has unfortunately not been of the magnitude that we would like.

We are hoping to remedy that with our request, which we will be presenting on March 8, to do that.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I am going to ask a rhetorical question. I think I know the answer from what you just said.

What infrastructure do we have in place at the national level to upgrade the quality of literacy?

Ms. ALVARADO. You are asking me, within the ACTION Agency?

Mr. MARTINEZ. Or even within any other agency. Is there an infrastructure in place on a national level that will help upgrade the quality of literacy training?

Ms. ALVARADO. I really cannot answer that from the perspective of other agencies. I do know that there are innumerable private sector organizations such as Literacy Volunteers of America and other such organizations who are providing top-notch training.

We have, in fact, tied in our volunteers and our project directors to receive that which has already been developed and which has been proven to work.

We have provided training to our people and we feel that that is a better use of our resources than specifically trying to create a component within the ACTION Agency that will duplicate expertise that is available in the community and in the nation at large, so we have tapped into what does exist.

Mr. MARTINEZ. That is a help.

Sargent Shriver—when the Chairman asked about the programs or bills that are up dealing with national service. Leo Panetta has one which came before our committee last year.

We worked with several organizations and perfected his legislation, and we think we have gotten to a point where if it is not perfect it is pretty near perfect.

There will be a fourth component of the VISTA program. It will provide for what we talked about earlier, other types of volunteers other than the college graduate from the white middle class neighborhood.

It would be a youth component, age 16 to 25. These people really come from disadvantaged backgrounds. We would provide, in return for their service to the community, education benefits and work experience and work ethic training.

Do you think this would be a good idea to help meet some of that infrastructure need that is not being met now in the community?

We imagine that there are anywhere from 35 to 114 of these kinds of corps all throughout the United States. Do you know for a fact how many there are? Fifty-three, I think, that we know of for a fact from our studies.

I believe there has been a lot of work done. These people are going on to other employment and to worthwhile lives on a similar basis as Job Corps-ers. I do not see any conflict with the program as it exists now by adding this fourth component of 16- to 25-year-olds.

What is your reflection on that?

Mr. SHRIVER. I wish I had read the bill, but the congressman just sent it over to my office—I do not know exactly where yet—one of his assistants asked me about it just about fifteen or twenty minutes ago, so I cannot make a comment about it as I have not even read it.

Perhaps it is a very good idea. I am not saying against it.

You know what happened in World War II when the intelligence services of the United States Army and Navy, et cetera, needed people trained in languages. They sent them for total immersion.

Some of my friends went to those language courses, for example, and learned Japanese to be interpreters, working in the military.

They trained thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in six months in the most esoteric languages for a white American to learn that could possibly have been the challenge.

Actually, if you really wanted to take care of the literacy problem that you are talking about, what you need is a national effort whereby everybody who wants to learn English can be taught it by a total immersion program. That is the way to learn a language.

You can spend ten years in a normal school in the United States without learning any language, and you can actually pass courses, because what you do is write, and you cannot speak the language at all. I did it myself, so I know what I am talking about. I have seen plenty of other people do it—my own kids have done the same damned thing.

You do not learn to speak the language, but you do learn it if you get a total immersion course.

Now you say, "Well, that costs too much." That is what everybody always says. Everything costs too much when it is an objective like the one you are interested in.

The objective you have, I think, is a legitimate one and one which perhaps a huge number of people in the Spanish- speaking community would respond to.

Why not underwrite that, like the Mexican-American Cultural Institute down in Texas does? Why not underwrite that kind of education, total immersion in language? We would overcome this problem in ten years, maybe quicker.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I think we would eliminate a lot of other problems.

Mr. SHRIVER. That is correct, you would.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Chairman, let me ask that the record be left open so that Sargent Shriver can respond after he has studied the

bill and respond to this program that is to be added as a fourth component to VISTA.

Chairman OWENS. Without objection, the record will be left open.

Mr. SHRIVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you again, Mr. Sargent Shriver and Ms. Alvarado.

Ms. ALVARADO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHRIVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was a pleasure to be with you here today.

Chairman OWENS. Our pleasure.

Our next and final panel consists of Dr. Daniel Thursz, the President of the National Council on the Aging; Mr. Wayne Meisel, the Director of the Campus Outreach Opportunity League; and Mr. John Estrada, the Coordinator of the Gang Intervention Program for the City of El Paso Youth Assistance Program.

You may begin, Dr. Thursz.

STATEMENT OF DR. DANIEL THURSZ, PRESIDENT, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING, INC.

Dr. THURSZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

It has been a long morning and I will be as brief as I can and, with you permission, enter my testimony into the record.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be here for a number of reasons. First of all, I want to celebrate with you the 25 years of the existence of the VISTA program and the government's only full-time domestic volunteer service program.

However, I have another reason to be here and it is a personal one, a personal reason which gives me great happiness.

In 1965, while an associate professor at the University of Maryland, I established one of the first VISTA training centers in the slums of Baltimore. I then took a leave of absence at the invitation of Sargent Shriver to become the Associate National Director of VISTA in the first couple of years of its existence.

In those days we had to invent an official context that would tap the volunteer spirit, while leaving it free to work in widely varying settings.

We made lots of mistakes during those first couple of years, but there was a sense of excitement and a sense of synergy that made us feel that we were not only making a contribution to helping some of the poor of this country, but we were educating a whole generation of Americans about the nature of poverty and the real nature of this country.

Then, as now, VISTA had no age limit. It enlisted anyone who wanted to serve. I soon became impressed by the abundant evidence that older volunteers bring special gifts to their service, not the least of which is their perspective on life.

VISTA today remains a program for all generations. Of the present 2,800 volunteers, almost 22 percent are 55 or older. That includes 160 persons who are 65 to 69 years old and seventy who are seventy years and up.

My support for VISTA, as you can well imagine, is enthusiastic and steadfast. VISTA has earned a place in our society and the

only change that all of us would recommend is that it be given the resources to renew itself and to make even more of a contribution.

I am here today as the President of the National Council on the Aging, a nonprofit private organization with a membership of professionals and volunteers throughout the field. NCOA'S short definition of its mission is that it has worked since 1950 to improve the lives of older Americans. One of our functions is to originate ideas that we all can test in the field.

In the early days of OEO, during the so-called war on poverty, NCOA developed a model program to match low-income older persons to children with special, exceptional needs. That concept is embodied in another action program today known as Foster Grandparents.

The same concept has been applied in more recent days to three NCOA programs that I want to mention briefly, because they demonstrate the value of service by older Americans to the young. They also tell how we hope to avoid the mistake of focusing VISTA or any other volunteer program only on the young.

The statistics are clear. We who represent now an older part of the community have all the demographics in our favor. That means that we ought to begin to look at older people as a resource and not a dependent population that is frail—some of us are frail, but most of us are healthy and willing to continue to make a contribution to America.

I would hope that we would not, in our desire to get young people involved in VISTA, eliminate a clear message that we are seeking all Americans and that older Americans can make a significant contribution.

Let me just, in conclusion, mention those three programs, because they illustrate what I am talking about.

One is Family Friends, which now brings senior volunteers to the homes of chronically ill or disabled children twelve and younger, to help the parents and the children overcome the psychosocial stress that such families suffer.

Family Friends is a win-win-win program. The volunteer benefits because he is loved and has a sense of purpose. The child who is at home, often isolated, benefits because there is somebody new who loves him and cares and hugs him. Finally, the parents, who are caught in this horrible, difficult situation, get rested and they win because they get a chance to go to the movies or to go out of the house and go shopping, knowing that somebody is part of the family.

The second program is called Latchkey. Latchkey is, again, quite simple. It is just that senior center members, older Americans, can give a few hours of their time each day to after-school youngsters who otherwise might face loneliness or worse.

Finally, Teamwork, a project that demonstrates that older job coaches can help younger people with disabilities find their place in the job market. Again, these are ways of tapping the resources of older Americans to make a difference.

Now, I do not fool myself into thinking that all of these programs will change the face of America, but there is an old saying that if you save only one life it is as if you had saved the universe.

VISTA has the ability to attract people of all ages to serve again and to make a difference and begin to save some lives. I think it is time for us to not only redouble but to take the step that Sargent Shriver was talking about, to make VISTA the kind of program that we had in mind 25 years ago and that has been decimated, unfortunately, in the past too many years.

Mr. Chairman, we of the National Council on the Aging would be happy to cooperate with you, members of Congress or with the administration in making this possible.

With your permission, I would like to submit some additional material that might be helpful for the record.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Daniel Thursz follows:]

NCOA CONTACT: Dr. Thursz
or William Oriol, NCOA,
202/479-1200

TESTIMONY BY DR. DANIEL THURSZ, PRESIDENT,
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON THE AGING, INC.

at a hearing by the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SELECT EDUCATION,
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

on

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA

February 23, 1989 9:30 A.M. 2257 Rayburn HOB

Thank you Chairman Owens and members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here for many reasons, including the observation, made in your letter of invitation, that this 25th anniversary year for VISTA provides an important opportunity to recognize the achievements of the federal government's only full-time domestic volunteer service program. You are also focusing on potential future missions for VISTA, which is especially appropriate at a time of renewed public interest in volunteer service.

I am here as President of the National Council on the Aging, a nonprofit, private organization with a membership of professionals and volunteers throughout the field. NCOA's short definition of its mission is that it has worked since 1950 to improve the lives of older Americans. We are researchers, originators of ideas that we often test in the field, and advocates on many fronts. A number of NCOA's activities are

relevant to this hearing's theme of volunteerism in action, and I will describe them in just a moment.

First, however, I want to go back to the very earliest days of VISTA, because I was there. In 1965, I took a leave of absence from my duties as an associate professor at the School of Social Work and Community Planning in the University of Maryland in order to serve as Associate National Director for VISTA. We who were then working for the very young Office of Economic Opportunity did not have the good sense, or even the time, to be daunted by what we were called upon to do.

At VISTA, we had to invent an official context that would tap the volunteer spirit while leaving it free to work in widely varying settings for a multitude of purposes. From the very beginning, it was clear that VISTA should have no age limit; it was meant to enlist anyone who wanted to serve. I soon became impressed by evidence that older volunteers bring special gifts to their service, not the least of which is perspective on life's happenings.

VISTA remains a program for all generations. Of the present 2,788 volunteers, 21.9 per cent are 55 years or older. This includes 176 between ages 60 to 64, 160 65 to 69, and 70 who are 70 years and up. Older persons are also among those served by VISTA, in many ways, including meals delivery for the frail. In San Francisco, senior volunteers help other elders avoid mistakes in the uses of medication, to give another example of a specific service.

My support for VISTA, as you can well imagine, is enthusiastic and steadfast. VISTA is a proud achievement. It has earned a place in our society. The only change I recommend is that VISTA be given the resources to make even more of a contribution.

NCOA'S INNOVATIONS

Turning now to NCOA, I must first report that I have been with that great organization for less than a year. After leaving VISTA and returning to the University of Maryland as dean of the school of social work, I served as Executive Vice President of B'nai B'rith International from 1977 to 1987. In those capacities, I maintained a strong conviction about the value of VISTA and volunteer action. When I joined NCOA in July 1988, I found that I had inherited a number of traditions and achievements from pioneering, independent thinker-activists.

A number of those achievements relate to your request for views on the intergenerational and other roles of older persons as volunteers or recipients of volunteer services. I will briefly describe a few of them, because I believe that NCOA has gradually developed a body of knowledge and experience not only about service by elders but about the community needs they can help meet.

- At the time I was serving with VISTA, NCOA developed model OEO action programs including one that matched low-income older persons to children with special or exceptional needs. That concept is embodied in the

Foster Grandparents Program, now another ACTION program. In 1987, some 19,000 volunteers contributed almost 20 million hours to assist children who were disabled, illiterate, retarded, or even caught up in juvenile delinquency. Now accepted as part of the American scene, Foster Grandparents was once merely an idea. It turned out to be an idea that works, and inspires.

- NCOA in 1968 launched what has since become its Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) for disadvantaged older workers. Though not a program for unpaid volunteers, SCSEP has gradually built a body of knowledge about community service needs, training needed help SCSEP enrollees meet such needs, and supervisory skills that help older men and women as they take on new challenges.

- Project FIND, conducted by NCOA in 1966, helped document major gaps in services available for older Americans, including gaps that can be provided by volunteers.

- A Harris poll commissioned by NCOA in 1974 found that 22 per cent of the public 65 and over reported that they do volunteer work. A Harris poll conducted for

NCOA found in 1981 a strong desire by older Americans to remain active in society, not only through continuity in the paid labor force, but also through unpaid volunteer work.

- Several relatively recent NCOA programs put older Americans to work in intergenerational settings. "Family Friends" brings senior volunteers to the homes of chronically ill and disabled children 12 and younger, to help the parents and children overcome the psychosocial stress that such families suffer. A demonstration "Latchkey" project proved it is practical for senior center members to give a few hours of their time each day to become friends to afterschool youngsters who might otherwise face loneliness or worse while awaiting for parents to come home from work. "Teamwork" demonstrated that older "job coaches" can help younger persons with disabilities to find their place in the job market.

- NCOA recognizes the importance of volunteers in other ways. Our National Institute of Senior Centers, for example, helps professionals develop volunteer programs. The same is true of our National Institute on Adult Daycare and other membership units. We are gradually building a wealth of knowledge on volunteer

activity.

CONCLUSIONS

I've given this outline of NCOA experience with volunteer programs and community needs in order to help me make the point that we in this nation may have far more knowledge about mobilizing volunteers, and using their talents well, than we realize.

The task now, it seems to me, is to sharpen our national thinking about the direction and nature of federal efforts to encourage still more volunteers of all ages to take on whatever good causes motivate them.

VISTA, after a quarter-century, offers a crucial framework for action--the opportunity to serve for a specified amount of time for a particular purpose. Foster Grandparents takes another route. Retired Volunteers in Service to America, or RSVP, takes still another, making more than 387,000 volunteers available to 47,200 community agencies nationwide.

It is good that we have variety in our federal volunteer programs. But VISTA and the Peace Corps are the essential outlets for full time, dedicated service of both young and old in the context of the highest ideals of our country.

And now, it is high time that we begin to work towards certain national goals, and decide on ways to reach them. All our present efforts, including VISTA, are demonstration programs that amply demonstrated their value long ago. Their future development

is now dictated, not by their full potential usefulness, but by today's budgetary containment pressures.

We need more than that. To make our case for a genuine national volunteer plan, we should begin by documenting the needs that should be met and the ways in which volunteers can help us meet them.

We hope that the present Administration's vision of a "thousand points of light" includes a realistic appraisal of the potential role of volunteers in reaching certain national objectives. It would be narrow indeed to regard volunteers as merely an inexpensive alternative to public responsibility and action.

During this decade, the United States has been rearranging the division of government and the voluntary sector in meeting national needs. Too often the rearrangement is arbitrary and ill-considered. In the matter of optimum engagement of volunteers, we should avoid drift. We ought to pay attention to the lessons we should have learned over the past 25 years and before that, as well.

I'll conclude by recalling other times in our history when volunteers in the United States reached peaks of activity, only to be shunted aside or even forgotten. The Civil War played an interesting role in the history of social welfare and the volunteer. On the one hand, it served as the instrument that suddenly enlarged the total volunteer force in the country. On the other hand it gave impetus to the development of the paid

worker as the essential "ingredient" for the effective administration of social service. Much the same situation arose after World War I. One of my favorite quotations comes from a social worker named, appropriately enough, Mary Goodwillie. She challenged the 1917 National Conference of Social Work with these words:

> "All the future of social work depends on the way we answer the question [of relationships between trained professionals and volunteers], for it is not by developing a small group of experts, but by leading the larger body of volunteers that social change is accomplished."

Her warning does not apply exactly to the present situation. But it reminds us that a great deal of laboriously acquired knowledge about the best possible use of volunteers has been lost or diluted in the past. We have learned a great deal more in the last 25 years. We must act now to develop it further and put it to use in new and exciting ways. We must make good use of the feeling, shared by so many in this nation, that volunteering is as much an opportunity as a duty. As Bradford Smith stressed in his study, Why We Behave Like Americans:

> "Mutual, voluntary service is the means by which the active citizen realizes his position in society, satisfies a need for achievement, and develops a sense of security and mutual respect."

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Chairman OWENS. Without objection, the material will be entered into the record.

Dr. THURSZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman OWENS. The next speaker is Mr. Meisel. Wayne Meisel?

Mr. MEISEL. Yes, sir. Thank you for this chance to be in front of you.

I have learned something today. I used to think that I wanted to be a congressman, but I have learned that I cannot sit still long enough. Maybe it is my upbringing as a preacher's kid.

I also wanted to note to you that one problem I have is that I am dyslexic. It is something that I have overcome in a lot of ways, but one thing I cannot do is read aloud a written text, so I will do now what I have done, I think, all my life, and that is improvise.

I am here representing——

Chairman OWENS. Your statement will be entered into the record.

Mr. MEISEL. Yes, sir. Thank you. My spell-check went on the blink, but it always does because it kind of overheats whenever it gets one of my documents in it.

I represent an organization called COOL. COOL is a national initiative youth-run program—a youth-led program—that works as a platform for youth. We will work to build a new student movement based on students in community service.

We have about 450 colleges and universities that are part of that network, and in any given week there are between 200 and 250 thousand students who work in different community service initiatives.

Over the last five years I have spent my time traveling to probably over two hundred college campuses, working with students, community leaders and administrators trying to promote and champion the idea of students in service.

When I was growing up, a lot of people talked about what they wanted to be when they got older. Most of my friends wanted to play for the Knicks or play for the Mets or be a rock star. There is one thing that I wanted to be—I wanted to be VISTA when I was growing up.

When I first learned about VISTA—I think it was from my big brother who had been assigned to me from the local college—it was something that he told me he was thinking of doing. It sounded great to me.

Again, being a preacher's kid, I was always a little nervous about anything that seemed too religious, but VISTA seemed to be a way to do good without necessarily being good. That is an important distinction for a preacher's kid.

When I was growing up in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was a time of crisis and it was a time of hope. I remember vividly, having grown up in central New Jersey, the riots in New York and reading and hearing about Watts and what was going on in Detroit.

At the same time, there seemed to be a real hope to end poverty and a hope to end racism. Young people particularly seemed to be especially challenged and for some reason capable of making something happen in that area.

Over the years, however, something happened. Over those years people's attitudes about young people have changed. Instead of being part of the solution, somehow they became part of the problem.

As a young kid in high school I didn't like it, but somehow I believed it. I guess I figured—back then I believed everything I read and heard.

Today that stereotype that young people don't care and are not interested continues to hold forth.

Since that time I have discovered—or, should I say, I have rediscovered—something else. Idealism is the nature of youth. Let me say that again, because we do not hear that very often. Idealism is the nature of youth.

It is something that I knew when I was ten, but somehow I was talked out of it. Young people are not apathetic—vegetables are apathetic. People are not apathetic.

Young people's commitment and desire to be involved and their idealism is as much a part of any young person as a child's curiosity is to a growing child.

Like any athletic or artistic or musical talent, when left unsupported, young people's idealism and willingness and desire to serve will atrophy and fail to manifest itself.

Young people do care, and given the proper leadership, structure and challenge they will serve. When they do not get involved it is not because they do not care—it is because we have failed to tap and channel their energies.

Young people are particularly good at four things, in my study of being a young person.

Young people are particularly good soldiers, and that is very supportive. When John Paul Jones defeated the British in the battle of the Great Lakes in 1812 he was nineteen years old. Today we would call him a freshman.

Athletes are encouraged. Denise Parker is fourteen years old and she is the best archer this country has to offer and won an Olympic medal in Seoul this year.

Young people are great at computers. Steve Jobs and William Gates have revolutionized the computer industry and continue to lead it.

Young people are also great servants. They are low cost, high energy and embody certain talents of creativity, infectious enthusiasm and the impatience of youth.

We encourage the first three, but oftentimes we leave the last one unchallenged. America needs to challenge and support its young people to serve.

What does VISTA have to do with this? It has everything to do with this.

VISTA has the potential to challenge and support young people to serve. Currently, however, there are some structural flaws that inhibit VISTA to reach out to young people.

Why don't young people get involved? Some do. Maybe I could just briefly share with you a story of a woman named Louisa, who happens to be a good friend of mine. She graduated from college and became a VISTA volunteer and joined the Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey.

One of Louisa's job's while she was at VISTA was to tutor a woman named Jamie. Both Jamie and Louisa were 23 years old, but Jamie had just gotten out of prison, had three children, and each of them had been taken away. She needed to get a job, and in order to get a job she needed to get a license, and in order to get a license she needed to pass the written test.

Louisa started working with Jamie and as she was instructed to do, every session she was asked, "Are there any words you want to learn today, Jamie?" Then they would begin the lesson.

A couple of months later, around Christmastime, after Jamie had a particularly hard day trying to get access to visit her children during the holidays, the tutoring session started.

Again, Louisa asked that same question—"Are there any words you would like to learn today?"

Jamie paused. She said, "Yes, there are two words I want to learn. I want to learn the words respect and I want to learn the word dignity."

This was no longer a reading class. Instead, this was a struggle to discover and gain respect and dignity for these two women.

After a year's time Jamie got her license. She got her job and was able to reunite her family. Louisa continued as a VISTA volunteer and has since joined to work with me to create a national initiative to try to get college students involved and campuses involved in addressing the problems of literacy.

This is a tale of two cities, this is a tale of two heroines and this is a tale of VISTA.

The best figures that I have been able to come up with show that 13 percent of VISTA are people 18 to 25. At one point in the 1960s I was informed that it was as high as somewhere in the seventy percentile.

Rather than assume that young people today, though, are not as interested as they were back in the 1960s, we have to understand the pressures, because if we understand the pressures then we can perhaps come up with effective responses.

The things that keep people from getting involved in VISTA—we have talked about them before in this hearing—how people do not know about VISTA, students do not know about it. As Trish told you, it is often difficult to figure out how to get placed.

Community agencies that have VISTA opportunities often do not want young people to be involved because of the stereotypes that they have about young people. The stipend that VISTA offers is often below the poverty level.

The only thing more difficult, I think, than living in New York City on $513 a month, which is the current VISTA stipend, is trying to convince a young person that they can, indeed, do that.

I am reminded of the quote that says, "Make it difficult, but don't make it impossible."

VISTA has taken several steps under the leadership of Jane Kenney, to address these problems that should be recognized and applauded.

Last year in over two hundred school newspapers ads were placed to inform students about VISTA. Twenty-two hundred pamphlets were sent out to different career placement offices to inform students about VISTA.

The agency has sponsored a pamphlet to encourage agencies to hire young people. It has also established the Student Community Service Program, which supports young people in high school and college to do different community service.

I have several recommendations. Those include that what we need to have happen is that we need VISTA to have a presence on campus. We need to recruit and we need to make young people aware of the image of VISTA. We need to support individuals to get placement. We need to create more placements for VISTA.

In a survey done at the University of Minnesota 25 percent of the student body suggested that they would be interested in doing some kind of VISTA activity if it were offered to them. That represents eight thousand students.

It would be a disservice to try to get all of these young people interested in joining something like VISTA when there is no place to put them.

VISTA also needs to champion a spirit. VISTA is something exciting. VISTA is something that makes a difference. Finally, yes, there is a need to raise the stipend level.

Somehow it seems that the Peace Corps takes care of its own and the Army takes care of its own. VISTA needs to do the same.

I am reminded of a quote by the teacher who was asked why he decided to leave his profession if he liked his job. He responded, "How can you love something that doesn't take care of you?"

There is a lot of talk about national service. I know I have got to get off this platform, but I think that VISTA is a very important piece of that discussion of national service. It is a pillar. It is a cornerstone.

This nation has talked a lot about the need for national service but national service has failed to capture the imagination of both the policy makers and the public. In part, it is because we have a confused and a not very well defined vision of what national service is.

National service is not one particular program. National service is a spirit. National Service is a call to service. The person who was most successful in doing that was John F. Kennedy. He challenged young people and he supported young people.

There must be a way for young people to serve and feel a part of that national service.

There are four key cornerstones to developing a strong national service program—working with high schools and junior high schools to create community service programs, working with colleges and universities to create service initiatives, working with corps like the San Francisco Conservation Corps and working to provide opportunities for individuals to have placements in community agencies.

The fourth area is what VISTA offers and must continue to offer if America is going to have a strong national service program.

In conclusion, I would just like to make the statement that VISTA has made a major contribution to this country. It has created heroes and heroines like Louisa and Jamie. Their work must be both celebrated and continued. The history of VISTA is one of the great chapters of this country. The promise is one of our great dreams.

As we approach the twenty-fifth anniversary of VISTA, I hope it will not be a painful reminder of what might have been or faded dreams. Instead, I hope it will be a celebration, one that will recognize the heroic deeds and noble actions of individuals and communities alike and that VISTA will experience a rebirth of energy, commitment and purpose. Thank you, Sir.

[The prepared statement of Wayne Meisel follows:]

Testimony by Wayne Meisel
to the House Committee on Education and Labor
for VISTA and its 25th Anniversary
February 6, 1989

When I was growing up in Central New Jersey in the late 60's and early 70's there was a lot of talk about what we wanted to do when we got older. Most of my friends wanted to play for the Knicks or the Mets while others wanted to be fireman, astronauts and rock stars. When I was growing up there was one thing that I wanted to do, I wanted to be VISTA.

I do not even know how I first heard about VISTA. I think it was when my big brother, who was a college student that had been assigned to me by a local big brother program. He told me it was something that he was planning to do.

It sounded like a great thing to me. Being a preachers kid, I was always weary of anything that was very religious. VISTA, however, seemed to be a way for me to do good without necessarily being good or being viewed by my peers or parents as a goody good.

That was a time when there was crisis in the streets of our cities. I vividly remember the riots in Newark and hearing about Watts and Detroit. Yet at the same time there was a hope, particularly among young people that somehow we could change things. There was a belief and a commitment that this nation could come closer to ending poverty and eliminating racism. Young people in particular seemed especially capable and ready to do what they could to make this happen.

Then something happened over the next few years. I do not remember a particular moment when I started thinking this way, but somewhere during that time it became clear that young people, instead of being seen as idealistic and concerned, became apathetic and uninterested in community issues. I did not like the stereotype that people had about me and my generation or that I had about my peers. I assumed, however, the things that I read and heard were true and I accepted them as fact.

This negative stereotype of young people continues today. Survey after survey, article after article suggests and indeed "proves" that young people do not care.

Idealism and the nature of youth

I have come to discover something else, or should I say rediscover something. Idealism is the nature of youth. Let me say it again because we do not hear it very often, "idealism is the nature of youth." It is something I knew when I was ten but some how I got talked out of it. Young people are not apathetic, vegetables are apathetic. Idealism is as instinctive to a young person as curiosity is to a growing child. Yet, like athletic ability, artistic talent or intellectual capability, when left unchallenged and unsupported idealism and commitment to serve will atrophy and fail to manifest itself.

Young people do care and are involved. Given the proper leadership, structure and challenge young people will serve their communities and serve their country. When students do not get involved it is not because they do not care, but because we have failed to tap and channel their energy, creativity and infectious enthusiasm. Rather then an apathy on the part of young people, we are experiencing a structural apathy. Our leaders, government, agencies and institutions have failed to present an effective challenge and support meaningful and competent programs.

Young people are particularly gifted in four areas. Young people make great soldiers. When John Paul Jones defeated the British in the battle of the Great Lakes in 1812 he was nineteen years old. Today we would call him a freshman. Young people make great athletes. Denise Parker at age 14 is the best female archer and an Olympic medal winner in Soul this past Summer. Young people are great at computers. Steve Jobs and William Gates in their early twenties revolutionized the computer industry and continue to lead and challenge that industry. Young people also make great community servants. They are low cost, high energy and embody such qualities as creativity, impatience and infectious enthusiasm. This is something that all our communities need. We encourage and support the first three areas, but not the last.

America needs to challenge and support its young people to serve.

VISTA
What does this have to do with VISTA?

It has everything to do with VISTA.

VISTA has the potential to both the challenge and support young people to serve their country. Currently there are some structural flaws that inhibit VISTA's ability to do this for young people.

Why don't young people get involved in VISTA? Some do.

Let me share with you a story about one that did.

Louisa graduated from college and went to work for Literacy Volunteers of new Jersey as a VISTA Volunteer. One of Louisa's job was to tutor several adult learners. One of those people was Jamie, who like Louisa was a twenty-three year old woman.

When the two began working together, Jamie she had recently been released from prison. All three of her children had been taken away and she was unable to regain custody. In order to do so Jamie needed a job and to get a job she needed to be able to drive. To be able to drive she needed a drivers licence. She couldn't get a licence because she could not past the written test.

Each time Louisa and Jamie would get together Louisa would start out the session with the question that she had been taught to ask... "Are there any particular words that you want to learn today" and they would go on from there.

One day, after Jamie had been bounced around from one agency to the next trying to get access to her children she came to meet with Louisa. In her typical high energy manner Louisa asked Jamie the question that she always began with, "Are there any particular words that you want to learn today." Jamie stopped for a moment ... and responded, "Yea, there are two words that I want to learn. I want to learn the word respect and I want to learn the word dignity."

From that point on this was no longer a reading class. It was a struggle to gain and discover respect and dignity for these two woman. For the next year the two worked together. Jamie got her drivers licence, found a job and eventually regained custody of her family. Louisa finished her stay as a VISTA volunteer and then went on to create and lead a national initiative to encourage colleges students and campuses to work on addressing the

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problem of illiteracy. Today Louisa is not only one of the leading figures in the literacy and the new student community service movements.

This is a tale of two cities, a tale of two heroines, a tale of what VISTA is all about.

VISTA and young people today
Thirteen percent of VISTA volunteers fit into the 18 -25 age bracket. Compared to the late 60's when the numbers were up in the high 70's, these numbers are low. While I strongly support and encourage the involvement of other people in VISTA, especially older Americans and individuals on public assistance, it is important that young people be an active and vital presence within VISTA.

Rather then make the assumption that young people are different or just not interested as they were twenty years ago, it is important to uncover the reasons why young people are not as involved with VISTA. By doing this we will understand the pressures young people are faced with and be able to come up with effective responses.

In my travels I have found that young people are not involved in VISTA for the following reasons.

• Young people do not know about VISTA. Some may have a vague notion of what it is but most students have never heard of it. When I tell them, they become interested.

• Even when a student does decide he/she wants to become a VISTA volunteer it is often a difficult, confusing and discouraging process to get a placement with VISTA.

• VISTA sponsoring agencies are often not interested in hiring individuals in the 18-25 age group. This attitude is reflective of the general public's perception that young people are not reliable, committed or capable of providing quality service.

• The stipend for a VISTA volunteer as it stands now is below the poverty level. Unless someone is on Federal assistance or has the financial backing of supportive parents it is often difficult for individuals to be able to join VISTA. As I understand it, stipend levels in many parts of the country are below poverty level.

It is very difficult to convince anyone that they can live in New York metropolitan area on the $513 per month stipend that VISTA currently offers. It is more difficult to actually try and do it. Young people do not need to be earning a fortune but they do need enough to meet basic needs of shelter, food and health care. While there are a few people that will get involved even at this stipend level, a viable subsistence level is necessary in order to attract quality and quantity. I am reminded of the quote " Make it difficult but please don't make it impossible."

Action by ACTION
In the past few years ACTION has taken several steps to support youth involvement in community service that should be recognized.

• Last year VISTA placed ads in over 200 campus newspapers and sent material to over 2,200 career placement offices.

• In response to agencies not wanting to higher younger people the agency commissioned our organization to write a booklet to reach out to VISTA sponsored agencies encouraging them to hire younger people as VISTA's.

• ACTION has also established the Student Community Service Program which supports the development and growth of high school, college and community efforts designed to get students involved. The community service grants have played a major role in the development and strengthening of this student service movement by supporting over 100 service initiatives that place thousands of students in the community on a weekly basis. They will also hopefully educate community agencies about the important role that young people can play in addressing community concerns.

Recommendations
Listed below are several suggestions on on ways VISTA can encourage and support youth involvement

• presence on campus-
Students need to know about VISTA. They need to know that the program exists, understand it and be aware of the history and the impact that it has had. Therefore we need to spend more energy educating this population and recruiting at schools

• support individuals in finding VISTA placements
Not only do people need to be educated and encouraged to apply to be a VISTA volunteer but they need help in going through the process. Currently from stories that I have heard from peers it is an incredible frustrating and discouraging process. Some type of national recruiting scheme needs to be created so that we can support individuals who are interested but need guidance and support.

• create more placements
We would be doing everyone a disservice if we left here, made a massive recruiting blitz to get young people interested and then had no place for them to go. As I have noted the interest is great. In a recent survey completed at the University of Minnesota, 25% of the students surveyed said they would give strong consideration to serving in a program like VISTA. It seems to me that currently we do not have the slots to support a large number of young people in VISTA. I hope this will change.

• champion the spirit of service
VISTA I hope will provide leadership and a challenge to America's youth. VISTA needs to be presented to young people today as an exciting and viable program that enables them to make a difference. The agency needs to support a leadership and an image that projects this to our young people.

• raise stipend levels
There are no two ways about it. Stipends must be raised if you want to enable young people to serve as VISTA volunteers. Peace Corps takes care of its own, the army takes care of its own, but VISTA, with stipends that exist below the poverty level, to often does not. I am reminded of the quote by the teacher that said when asked if he liked the profession that he recently left, " How can you love something that doesn't take care of you."

The National Service debate and VISTA
There is much talk of late about national youth service. It is exciting that this topic has reached such a high level of debate and is now on the agenda of policy makers and educations. One question that people might have is how does VISTA relate to all of this. VISTA must be a major piece of the national youth service initiatives.

National service in essence is a call to service, a challenge to all young people to serve. A junior high student collecting cans for a food drive or participates in a March of Dimes

walkathon, a 19 year old member of the San Francisco Conservation Corps, a junior at the University of Minnesota working in a tutoring program or a recent college graduate working as a VISTA volunteer in Summerville, New Jersey must all be felt that they are part of the national youth service movement.

How can we challenge young people to get involved and thus create a national service program? There are four key areas that need to be covered. They are high school and junior high service programs, college and university initiatives, full time service corps such as the California Conservation Corps and full time individual placements, primarily for recent graduates of high school and college.

The last area is what VISTA represents. To present a strong "call to serve" to our nation's youth, we must have a program which encourages and enables them to serve at a full time level. VISTA has done this in the past. This country needs VISTA to do it now.

An anniversary and a rebirth for VISTA

VISTA has made a major contribution to this country. It has created heros and heroines like Louisa and Jamie. Their work must be both celebrated and continued. The history of VISTA is one of the great chapters of this country, its promise is one of our great dreams.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of VISTA, I hope it will not be a painful reminder of what might have been, faded dreams and dashed hope. Instead I hope it will be a celebration, one that will recognize the heroic deeds and the noble actions of individuals and communities alike and that VISTA will experience a rebirth of energy, commitment and purpose.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you. Mr. Estrada.

STATEMENT OF JOHN ESTRADA, COORDINATOR, CITY OF EL PASO'S GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Mr. ESTRADA. Thank you, Mr. Owens and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting us to be here for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Volunteers in Service to America—the VISTA program.

My name is John Estrada. I am the coordinator for the Gang Intervention Program in the city of El Paso, Texas, under the Department of Community and Human Development. We are deeply privileged to come before this committee on behalf of VISTA.

The year was 1966 when I first heard of VISTA, as I had been one of the fortunate students to be selected to participate in the Upward Bound program.

I remember that among those upper classmen from the University of Texas at El Paso, then called Texas Western College, who served as tutor-counselors was Mr. Larry Sears, whom we came to find out was a VISTA volunteer assigned to that project.

The influence of Mr. Sears and indeed the whole staff of the Upward Bound project was a turning point in my life as well as those of my peers. Having come from the barrio element and, in fact, a product of some anti-poverty programs, I have long felt a sense of joy and salvation from these experiences.

My adult and professional life has been devoted to helping my fellow man. I do not need to be a VISTA to be humbled. My humility has, indeed, however, given me strength to help my fellow man.

The concept from which VISTA operates—to mobilize community resources, to address specific poverty-related problems—is consistent with my individual and programmatic philosophy. Only when you teach people how to become self- sufficient will their quality of life improve significantly. So it is with the VISTA project which we operate in El Paso, Texas.

We are a young population, and indeed the problems confronting our youth are very severe. Among these are high rates in dropouts, teen pregnancies, drug abuse, illiteracy, delinquency and gangs.

It is a well-documented fact that all these social ills are interrelated, with their roots stemming from low socioeconomic conditions.

In an attempt to address these issues we have formulated our Gang Intervention Program, which is now entering its fourth year in operation.

To a very large part, the program was made possible through the federal ACTION program through its VISTA project. The city of El Paso provides administrative support while Action provides the VISTA volunteer slots.

Let me elaborate on how invaluable this project has been to our people and our community. From the onset, this project was well thought out and received considerable support from the city government.

Our relationship with the state program director, Mr. Jerry Thompson, and his staff, the regional director Mrs. Paulette Stan-

defer, and indeed with Ms. Jane Kenney and Ms. Donna Alvarado at the federal level has been extremely supportive.

This has given us the impetus to develop strong linkages within our own city. The vehicle for this is the Mayor's Task Force on Gang Intervention, where representatives from the various sectors of our community, such as council members, police, school, housing, recreation, mental health, social work, youth employment, lay people and others come together to openly discuss ideas on what direction we are heading and how we can better serve our youth.

As coordinator for the VISTA project, my role is to inform the committee on our overall goals and objectives and to enlist their assistance in mobilization of resources to bring to bear to this complex problem.

Within the past three years the credibility of our project and hence the reciprocity of our networking efforts have materialized.

The role of the VISTA volunteers in the barrios has been to augment whatever services exist or, if there are none, to identify said and begin to mobilize these resources for a viable service delivery system.

Their role is not adversarial but rather complementary. The general approach is holistic in nature. We feel that we have made significant strides in this endeavor.

Because of the unique circumstances which local gangs create, we have recruited and will continue to advocate for the local recruitment of VISTA volunteers from the barrio ranks.

These volunteers have provided the invaluable opportunity to access this unique target population because most of them are very streetwise and themselves have survived the gang element so prevalent in our barrios.

Of course, providing proper training in street work and social work principles is paramount for the VISTA volunteers. In our experience this combination has been very fruitful. In the absence of any positive role models for many of these young people, the VISTA volunteer has emerged and he has worn the responsibility and respect well.

I would like to highlight the finer qualities of the VISTA project, including some of the functions of the VISTA volunteers as well as their impact upon the youth they serve and the community as a whole.

As I have indicated, we are using a community-based approach to the problems of gangs, and through the VISTA volunteers we are enlisting and mobilizing community resources to benefit identified youth.

The VISTA volunteers have been very instrumental in giving input to the VISTA Project Work Plan, which consists of 27 goals and objectives.

Other functions include identification of youth at risk. They serve as liaison for community and community service providers, attend meetings to address barrio problems, make referrals to youth programs, to jobs, establish committees to address problems, identify and seek out resources to benefit youth, and assist with the provision of direct intervention methods and socialization activities which are designed to increase their respective level of functioning.

In brief, the overall function is to reduce the incidence of gang-related activities among identified youth. In many respects the VISTA volunteer is the epitome of a grass roots worker in the barrio bastions.

The success of the VISTA project has served as a role model for others to follow. It has rekindled the belief that collaboration and coordination of effort to address social problems does not need to entail large pots of money.

One of the keys to the mobilization effort is the sense of community pride which each community has to realize. In our city we have come to grips with this and have begun to fully realize the negative impact and economic costs of disenfranchisement of our youth.

The VISTA volunteers have had a very positive impact on the youth that they serve because for the most part they would have gone without. As with most prevention programs, units are difficult to measure.

However, we can say without reservation that the overall attitude and awareness of our community toward the gang problem has changed tremendously.

Through the efforts of VISTA volunteers we have been able to identify youth groups who could potentially become gangs, and we have established an alternative for them to participate in more constructive activities.

Over the years we have been able to work with over five hundred youths and with another five hundred family members. Working with the Youth Employment Program, we have been able to find summer jobs for fifty youths. We have been able to work with the school system to identify over three hundred potential dropouts and have succeeded in keeping them in school.

We have worked with as many of the local organizations as possible to bring to bear efforts to try to increase the level of function for a lot of these youngsters, a very considerable part of whom are parents.

Another component that we were able to access has been the business sector, whom we have been able to successfully lobby to provide free passes to Sunday football games, the circus, the rodeo, the amusement park and we have received other products to give as incentives to youth such as T-shirts, school supplies, reading books, dictionaries, pizzas, hamburgers, Cokes and other prizes such as trophies and certificates.

The VISTA Volunteers have been very instrumental in getting us positive media coverage for youth activities. In short, we have been able to work with high risk youth and the VISTAs have stood up and delivered.

This work with youth has been permeated the rest of the community, where there is now a sense that we are able to contain this problem before it gets out of hand. We have created a sense of community involvement where we are now accessing the right groups, such as Leadership El Paso, the civic clubs such as Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions, Boy Scouts, 4-H, YMCA, YWCA, the Arts Resources Department, the Community Foundation and other significant action groups.

Through VISTA volunteer efforts we are bridging the gap with traditional organizations and using nontraditional approaches. These are all positive impacts which can be directly attributed to the VISTA volunteers.

It is now to the point where we are invited to present and to participate in key committees dealing with our youth. The combination of forces of which VISTA volunteers are an integral part has lent itself very well to this problem.

In summary, I would like to again thank this committee for the great opportunity to come before you and share my utmost admiration for the VISTA program and to encourage its continued funding.

In closing, I would like to say, let us gang up on the real issues confronting our youth. Viva VISTA.

As a footnote, I would like to say that life in the barrio can be captured in the words of Tennyson. "So many worlds, so much to do, so little done, such things to be."

It is a very fatalistic outlook, but I feel that VISTA is the key word and we need to encourage and continue VISTA, because VISTA in Spanish means "vision."

I think that Sargent Shriver captured it very well. We had the vision 25 years ago, and let us continue with the vision into the future.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of John Estrada follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN ESTRADA, COORDINATOR
CITY OF EL PASO'S GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Major Owens and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting us to present testimony to this hearing on the 25th Anniversary of the Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) Program. My name is John Estrada. I am the Coordinator for the Gang Intervention Program in the City of El Paso, Texas under the Department of Community and Human Development. We indeed feel privileged to come before this Committee on behalf of VISTA.

The year was 1966 when I first heard of VISTA as I had been one of the fortunate students to be selected to participate in the Upward Bound Program. I remember that among those upper classmen from the University of Texas at El Paso, then called Texas Western College, who served as tutor-counselors was Larry Sears whom we came to find out was a VISTA Volunteer assigned to this project. The influence of Mr. Sears and indeed the whole staff on the Upward Bound Project was a turning point in my life as well as those of my peers. Having come from the barrio element and in fact a product of some anti-poverty programs, I have long felt the sense of joy and salvation from there experiences. My adult and professional life has been devoted to helping my fellow man. The concept from which VISTA operates - to mobilize community resources to address specific poverty related problems is consistent with my individual and programmatic philosophy. Only when you teach people how to become self-sufficient will their quality of life improve significantly. So it is with the VISTA project we operate in El Paso, Texas.

Ours is a diverse and growing community with a population of over half a million. Within a rock's throw lies our sister city, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. El Paso continues to serve as its namesake, Paso del Norte (Pass to the North). Our problems are many and multi-faceted. Our population is predominantly Hispanic and yet most of the social problems continue to plague our people. We are a young

population and indeed the problems confronting our youth are severe. Among these are high rates in dropouts, teen pregnancies, drug usage, illiteracy, delinquency and gangs. It is a well documented fact that all these social ills are inter-related with their roots stemming from low-socio-economic conditions. In our attempt to address these issues we have formulated the Gang Intervention Program which is now entering its fourth year of operation. To a very large part, this program was made possible through the Federal ACTION Program through its VISTA project. The City of El Paso provides administrative support while ACTION provides the VISTA Volunteer slots.

Let me elaborate on how invaluable this project has been to our people and our community. From the onset, this project was well thought out and received considerable support from the city government. Our relationship with the State Program Director Mr. Jerry Thompson and his staff, the Regional Director Ms. Paulette Standefer and indeed with Ms. Jane Kenny and Ms. Donna Alvarado at the Federal level has been extremely supportive. This has given us the impetus to develop strong linkages within our own city. The vehicle for this is the Mayor's Task Force on Gang Intervention where representatives from the various sectors of our community i.e., council members, Police, school, housing, recreation, mental health, social work, youth employment, lay people and others come together to openly discuss ideas on what direction we are heading and how we can better serve our youth. As coordinator for the VISTA project, my role is to inform the committee on our overall Goals and Objectives and to enlist their assistance on mobilization of resources to bring to bear to this complex problem. Within the past three years, the credibility of our project and hence the reciprocity of our networking efforts have materialized. The role of the VISTA Volunteers in the barrios has been to augment whatever services exist or if there is a need for services to identify said and begin to mobilize these resources for a viable service delivery system. Their role is not adversarial but rather complimentary. The general approach is holistic in nature and we feel we have made significant strides in this endeavor.

Because of the unique circumstances which local gangs create, we have recruited and would continue to advocate for the local recruitment of VISTA Volunteers from the barrio ranks. These Volunteers have provided an invaluable opportunity to access this unique target population because most of them are very streetwise and have themselves survived the gang element so prevalent in our barrios. Of course, providing proper training in street work and social work principles is paramount for the VISTA Volunteers. In our experience this combination has been very fruitful. In the absence of any positive role models for many of these youth, the VISTA Volunteer has emerged and has worn the responsibility and respect well.

I would like to highlight some of the finer qualities of this VISTA project. Including some of the functions of the VISTA Volunteers as well as their impact upon the youth they serve and the community as a whole.

As I have indicated, we are using a community-based approach to the problems of gangs and through the VISTA Volunteers we are enlisting and mobilizing community resources to benefit identified youth. The VISTA Volunteers have been instrumental in giving input to the VISTA Project Work Plan which consists of twenty-seven goals and objectives. Other functions include identification of youth at-risk, serve as liaison for youth and community service providers, attend meetings to address barrio problems, make referrals to youth programs, to jobs, establish committees to address problems, identify and seek out resources to benefit youth, and assist with the provision of direct intervention methods and socialization activities which are designed to increase their respective level of functioning. In brief, the overall function is to reduce the incidence of gang related activities among identified youth. In many respects the VISTA Volunteer is the epitome of a grass roots worker in the barrio bastions.

The success of the VISTA project has served as a model for others to follow and it has rekindled the belief that collaboration and coordination of effort to address social problems does not need to

entail large pots of money. One of the keys to a mobilization effort is the sense of community pride which each community has to realize. In our city, we have come to grips with this and have begun to fully realize the negative impact and economic costs of disfranchisement of our youth. The VISTA Volunteers have had a positive impact on the youth they have served because for the most part they would have gone without. As with most prevention programs, units are difficult to measure. However, we can say without reservation that the overall attitude and awareness of the community toward the gang problem has changed tremendously. Through the efforts of VISTA Volunteers, we have been able to identify youth groups who could potentially become gangs, and we have established an alternative for them to participate in more constructive activities. Over the years we have been able to work with over five hundred youth and with another five hundred family members. Working with the local Youth Employment Program, we have been able to find summer jobs for fifty youth. We have been able to work with the school system to identify over three hundred potential dropouts and have succeeded in retaining them in school. We have coordinated efforts with local barrio youth to provide hundreds of hours of presentations in the areas of substance abuse prevention, gang prevention, AIDS prevention and other related youth issues. We have worked with local Optimists Clubs and they have sponsored the first Youth Optimist Club inside a Public Housing Complex. We have worked with local police for the prevention of major gang fights. We have worked with Neighborhood Improvement Associations to create Food Clubs in Public Housing Complexes. We have worked with Keep El Paso Beautiful and have created a VISTA Youth Clean Up project. We have worked with school administrators to provide anti-gang programs and mentor projects. We have worked with Parents Anonymous to create seven parent groups. We have also been successful in working with local businesses to donate products for successful socialization activities; this includes free passes to the Sun Bowl football game, the Circus, the Rodeo, Amusement Park, and have received other products to give as incentives to youth such as T-shirts, school supplies, reading books, dictionaries, pizzas, hamburgers, cokes, and prizes such as trophies and certificates. The VISTA Volunteers have also been instrumental in getting some positive

media coverage for youth activities. In short, we have been able to work with high risk youth and the VISTAS have stood up and delivered.

This work with youth has permeated to the rest of the community where there is now a sense that we are able to contain this problem before it gets out of hand. We have created a sense of community involvement whereby we are accessing more of the "right" groups such as Leadership El Paso, Civic Clubs (Kiwanis, Optimist, Lions) Boy Scouts, 4-H, YMCA, YWCA, the Arts Resources Department, Community Foundation, and other significant action groups. Through VISTA Volunteer efforts we are bridging the gap with traditional organizations and using non-traditional approaches. These are all positive impacts which can be directly attributed to the VISTA Volunteers. It is now to the point where we are invited to present and to participate in key committees dealing with our youth. The combination of forces of which VISTA Volunteers are an integral part has lent itself very well to this problem.

In summary, I would again like to thank this committee for this great opportunity to come before you and share my utmost adulation for the VISTA Program and would encourage its continued funding. In closing, I would like to say, Let Us Gang Up on the real issues confronting our youth. VIVA VISTA.

Thank you.

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Chairman OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Estrada.

Mr. Estrada, in your testimony you noted that it is important to your program that your VISTAs be locally recruited, just as other programs might have a need for VISTAs with special skills from outside the community.

Please tell us more about why you believe it is important that they must come from the local community.

Mr. ESTRADA. Sure. It depends on what problem areas you are trying to address. Obviously, if you are going to be working with local gangs, then you need to access the gang substructure. You are going to need somebody who is from the area and knows the gangs. This is exactly what we have done in our program.

When we first initiated the project, we did recruit ex-gang members, and now these individuals are serving as role models for some of the youngsters who are in the gang substructure or within the barrio element. So we are serving as role models and trying to draw them up.

The argument—or, the point of debate that I see here is that it would depend on the problem at hand. For example, I already noted that when I was growing up there was an individual who was a VISTA, and he was brought into our program, the program of Upward Bound, and he did present a different perspective which was needed in some areas, because in many cases a lot of these youngsters have such a closed perception of the world that you do need that other element.

Again, it would depend on what problem area you are trying to address, and ours is a very complex target population that you are trying to access, and therefore they are not going to open up to just anybody.

Chairman OWENS. Mr. Meisel, you noted that there has been a great explosion of interest among young people in service in the last few years and yet we have a situation where there is less and less youth participation in VISTA.

I know you partially answered the question already, but would you care to elaborate a little more on why you believe this has occurred and what would be necessary to get VISTA back in tune with the spirit of today's youth?

Mr. MEISEL. I think it is more of a structural problem than anything. I would call it a structural apathy.

What VISTA needs to do—as I suggested in my testimony—is that they need to get on the campus. Colleges have never heard of VISTA, or they have heard of VISTA but they do not think it is still in existence.

Again, I think one of the major things that we have to do is look at the stipend levels. Even though the students know that—when you are a VISTA volunteer you can get your loans deferred. Oftentimes they do not know that, and so it seems that either you have to—really, the only student who can become a VISTA volunteer is a crazy case like myself who is willing to live pretty far on the edge or someone whose parents are willing to support them. That to me seems to be the major problem.

Finally, I think that the image of VISTA, that is, of being a presence, something that is alive—I think the number one reason

young people are not involved is not that they don't care, but oftentimes they lack the confidence. They wonder, what can they do?

I think what VISTA has to show them is that there are ways that they can be involved, and VISTA has to be able to champion that.

Chairman OWENS. Do you think VISTA should cease to exist if it does not achieve a critical mass which would allow it to attract the attention of young people, to be big enough to be able to assert itself and publicize itself?

Mr. MEISEL. I think that is a very painful question. I believe there is a need to create a number of different windows of opportunity for young people to get involved.

When they talk about, in terms of the national service, vision--that there is a need for four pieces, the last piece being an opportunity for people to get involved on a full-time basis, oftentimes after they have been graduated from college, after they have been involved in the junior high program and the high school program and the college program or involved in the corps program.

VISTA offers that opportunity and needs to continue to offer it more and more. This is not the only organization that can provide that opportunity—the Jesuit volunteer corps, the Lutheran volunteer corps.

There are a number of different ways that people can get involved to provide that service, and those, too, must be supported and encouraged.

It seems that VISTA is a way for someone particularly interested or motivated by a sense of patriotism and by a sense of that heritage of John Kennedy and other people who have served us as VISTA volunteers.

Chairman OWENS. No matter what other programs we have, VISTA should continue to be one of those windows of opportunity?

Mr. MEISEL. VISTA has to be a part of that process. Otherwise we will fail again, as we have continued to fail over the last fifty years, to come up with a broad and effective national service presence and program.

Chairman OWENS. Dr. Thursz, there has been a basic agreement that VISTA ought to continue to emphasize full-time service and full-time immersion. Do you think this applies to the programs for older Americans, or should we look at increasing part-time service and emphasize it more?

Dr. THURSZ. Mr. Chairman, I think that, as it was indicated by Wayne, there are a lot of ways in which one can volunteer. The question is, what makes VISTA unique? What is so special about VISTA, just as what is so special about the Peace Corps?

I think it is the concept of full-time volunteering. I think that lots of older Americans are ready to volunteer on that basis.

If I were to restructure, I would not throw away VISTA. I would make VISTA that elite corps of people who give maximum effort as part of this campaign to serve America.

If I may comment on your previous question, Mr. Chairman, I remember 25 years ago, when I was the associate director of VISTA, we had a marketing plan. We had advertising on television and radio.

We had a public relations staff that told the stories of VISTA volunteers in national magazines as well as in the daily press. I have books full of articles, because we marketed VISTA.

I think that is what is missing under this present concept. It is a secret. No one really is devoting the kind of effort, the kind of funds that are required to establish a national image for VISTA.

You know, when you turn on a football game on Sunday you are going to get more ads from the armed forces to join, be a marine, fly a plane, go to a submarine, even though most people know about the armed forces.

VISTA is the kind of program that needs that kind of visibility.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you. Mr. Estrada, what if VISTA did not exist? Aren't there a number of other low income assistance programs funded by the state or the city or the federal government which could have helped your gang intervention program?

Mr. ESTRADA. Unfortunately, they have not come through. That is not to say that they are not there.

Chairman OWENS. What is special about VISTA?

Mr. ESTRADA. One of the unique qualities is the concept that they have, the philosophy, to mobilize resources.

In our work, when we deal with gangs in the gang intervention program, it is not just dealing with the gang per se. We are dealing with the holistic—with the whole community, the whole family structure, the system, is what we are trying to do.

It takes an organization effort to learn the system and to access the system. We talk about empowerment. That is primarily what we are saying.

A lot of these youngsters who are disenfranchised see no tomorrow, no horizon. That is why they have a very fatalistic outlook—it is just day-to-day existence. That is why drugs are so prevalent—you know, there is so much money involved.

Actually, what we are doing is a coalition of effort, you know, a collaboration. We do not need to increase the dollars. We just need to fine tune them and make it better as far as how we coordinate.

VISTA is a very, very cost-effective way of doing it, rather than hiring AA level types or bachelor degree types who do not have that experience in the barrios. They have got some background, but they really do not know the streets. It takes a while to train that person on the subculture.

Chairman OWENS. Thank you very much, all of you. You and the other witnesses have gotten us off to a very good start in our process of reauthorizing the VISTA program. We may call upon you for future comments of one kind or another. We do appreciate your being with us here at the start. Thank you.

The subcommittee meeting is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:20 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional material submitted for the record follows.]

Valerie Wildman

February 19, 1989

Congressman Major Owens
Subcommittee on Select Education
518 House Annex I
Washington, D.C.

Dear Major Owens:

It is with great regret that I cannot attend the hearin Thursday regarding the re-authorization of VISTA but I currently en route to begin shooting on location. M misgivings about not being able to testify before you subcommittee are intensified by the tragic possibility tha VISTA may not live on. As you may surmise, my feelings about the re-vitalization of VISTA run very deep.

I spent a year as a VISTA volunteer in the low-income housing projects on the eastside of San Antonio, Texas in a delinquency prevention program called N.Y.P.U.M. The National Youth Project Using Minibikes (N.Y.P.U.M.) was a project co-sponsored by HONDA and the YMCA to draw pre-delinquent and delinquent youth off the streets into our program.

This was without a doubt the most impactful year of my life. Initially entering the ghettoes with ignorance and fear, my eyes were opened to the gross misconceptions that our middle and upper-income constituencies hold about minorities and the impoverished in general. Within that year, hundreds of hopeless and frustrated young faces, both male and female, became faces full of love, humor, hope and inspiration about the future.

In an atmosphere of unemployment, drug addiction and general despair, it is difficult for any youth to overcome obstacles when he or she is not aware of the possible alternatives in life. Our six groups of young teens (both male and female) quickly lost interest in the mini-bikes per se and discovered with us for the **first** time everything from elevators and freeways to new creative talents to career and educational options that included future financial assistance. By working with families, schools and social agencies, their lives (and **our** lives) changed dramatically. I must confess that a very few surrendered to

the pressures of crime and, regretfully, prostitution, but the greater majority are living fulfilling and productive lives today. Occasionally, I will even receive phone calls and letters from young adults, once in my N.Y.P.U.M. group, who have tracked me down to tell me about their law school accomplishments or other life accomplishments and thank me for affecting their lives.

I can only reply in all sincerity that what I have done is so little in comparison to what they have done for me. My life will never be the same and this also holds true for my VISTA colleagues. With a B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Family Counseling, I have continued to work through the years with all kinds of youth and their families at home and abroad. Currently, I coordinate domestic and Latin American projects for Operation California, a non-profit international medical relief organization, while pursuing my film and television career. My VISTA co-worker, Ed Griffin, continues to work with families in low-income housing projects (now in Los Angeles); my VISTA supervisor, Anthony Edwards, is still actively working with youth through the Eastside YMCA in San Antonio; and Beatriz Fernandez, my other VISTA co-worker, is in Egypt coordinating a Foster Grandparents program.

Now, in 1989, a huge modern YMCA complex stands on the eastside of San Antonio where ten years prior stood a basketball court and a small trailer filled with four VISTA workers who touched hundreds of lives and, in turn, have been touched....never to be the same.

My experience is only one of thousands. VISTA **must** live on. What ha our country become if "the land of the people, by the people and for the people" will no longer help its own?

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, the subcommittee, and Sargeant Shriver in the very near future to discuss in more detail the necessary re-vitalization of VISTA. Thank you for inviting me to testify.

Respectfully,

Valerie Wildman

Valerie Wildman

National Impact and Long Term Benefits of VISTA

Testimony by Marvin Schwartz
to the House Subcommittee of Select Education,
Washington, D.C.

February 23, 1989

Marvin Schwartz
109 Griffith
Conway, AR 72032

An assessment of the national benefit and long term impact of the VISTA program ought to begin with a recognition of current needs. Conditions of poverty, illiteracy, homelessness and other symptoms of a struggling underclass are continuing if not actually increasing in scope. These conditions can be linked to a national failure to address the communal aspects of personal and social development.

The persistence of these social indicators do not, however, reflect a specific failure within the VISTA program of previous years. Rather, these on-going conditions offer sound justification for VISTA's continuation as one of the nation's most efficient and cost effective anti-poverty programs.

In our time, poverty and its accompanying degrees of prejudice are being addressed in strikingly different ways than in the early years of the VISTA program. The outright displays of aggression that marked the late 1960s are no longer tolerated. They have been replaced by social indifference, a silent and more sinister means of abuse. In the late 1980s, the ethics of self advancement have been used to justify a widespread disinvolvement from social responsibilities.

Results of this attitude have been publicized in the business environment in what has been labeled a "crisis in human capital." Our work force is not prepared to assume the responsibilities of a technologically advanced global market. The relationship between economic development and human development is clear. If left unattended, the unsuccessful pull down the successful.

My research in VISTA and its application over a twenty year period in Arkansas has resulted in a book titled "In Service to America: A History of VISTA in Arkansas." The book is the first of its kind to study the effect of a VISTA program on the community and individual level within a specific state. While the projects and personalities explored in its pages are distinctly Arkansan, they are also Southern in the context of an agrarian background and human rights. In the largest sense, they are American in their reflection of large scale commitment toward issues of urban and rural poverty.

Among the many outstanding community service programs started in Arkansas through VISTA, two projects have distinguished themselves in every category. They are a cooperative medical clinic and a rural folkcrafts production and marketing organization. Both programs have fulfilled the VISTA ideal by becoming independent entities with broad based community support.

ARVAC RURAL FOLKCRAFTS: Started in 1975, this central Arkansas crafts cooperative functions on the concept of self-sufficiency applied to a group. Co-op members make traditional Arkansas crafts such as white oak baskets, quilts, and dolls which are marketed through an international sales network. In addition to generating significant income for the producers and preserving folk craft traditions, the co-op has created a sense of pride and motivation in an area where poverty has been common since the Great Depression.

LEE COUNTY COOPERATIVE MEDICAL CLINIC: This east Arkansas health services organization was initiated in 1970 in an area recognized as among the poorest in the nation. Having achieved a

dramatic turnaround in the area's infant mortality rate, malnutrition levels, and basic health practices, the clinic is a model of community involvement overcoming racial and economic barriers. Last year, the clinic's value to the community was advanced even further when the Lee County hospital, like rural health systems across the nation, closed its doors due to financial failure.

The full benefits and long term impact of programs such as the Lee County Clinic and the Rural Folkcrafts Co-op may be impossible to measure. Beyond the revenue created or the health services provided, intangible life values have been absorbed by the communities that have worked in behalf of these grass roots organizations. These values are demonstrated through an enhanced self-awareness and a resulting increase in self-motivation.

One VISTA consequence is a more precise awareness of the origin of problems, an understanding not limited to the less affluent members of society. One east Arkansas community published a newspaper editorial that commented on VISTA-provided legal services with the following statement:

> "...this has brought criticism from good citizens who wouldn't think of oppressing anybody by force, but don't hesitate to allow them to be denied their rights through their own lack of information. We didn't fully realize the extent of this oppression until shown by the VISTA program."

With the assistance of VISTA Volunteers, Arkansas communities have realized they can do things for themselves instead of relying on others to do things for them. This

awareness has evolved into a new sense of hope and determination. On the most personal level, Volunteers have reinforced the virtues of problem solving. They have done so by making communities aware of external resources and by motivating them from within.

Through its projects, VISTA represents unified action and a willingness to do things despite clearly perceived obstacles. The momentum created supports the concept of community and self-improvement as a process, not a single event. VISTA gets people to believe that change is possible. It replaces apathy with a sense of hope.

Social maturity and an awareness of human resources are intangible benefits. Yet the primary lesson of VISTA is that value does not come from the program itself, but from its results. The lasting benefits of all VISTA programs are gained long after the last Volunteers have been assigned. But the initial presence and efforts of Volunteers are necessary to set the process in motion.

By its nature, VISTA is an invisible program. The value of a match that starts a fire is greatly reduced once the fire is burning. Volunteers are taught to keep themselves in the background. To the old VISTA training motto of "to help people help themselves," a clever Arkansas program supervisor has added, "but don't let them know who did it."

Where VISTA has succeeded, the results are outstanding, but the projects have not always achieved long term or lasting results. The loss of effort has resulted in a social inertia, a

complacency placated with token gestures, and a new generation of dependent citizens unaware of the struggles and advances of those who came before them.

This condition is less the exception than the rule. Material comforts and even minimal social gains are the outward trappings of success, but they must never be held as an end in themselves. A community activist from Texarkana, summarizing a 1971 VISTA project in her southwest Arkansas town, saw the problem in this light:

> "We ran out of gas and lost sight of the real issues before us. The Volunteers were successful during their time. When they turned us loose, we had homes and cars. But we became complacent and forgot about where we started. We're now back to that level, and our children have not realized the battles fought. A lot of people don't realize this. We get into our holes and stay there."

VISTA strives to develop heightened levels of community awareness and motivation. Its objective is to overcome the fundamental aspect of human nature that accepts a part for the whole and discourages those whose seek more than the status quo.

VISTA's long term benefit is its ability to elevate the human condition above short term gain. Its national impact can be measured in thousands of individuals who have served as key role models and provided positive direction to their communities. Current VISTA projects in Arkansas are continuing to achieve measureable results while developing the individual skills and community attitudes for long term gain.

Two outstanding projects operating in Pine Bluff are a literacy tutoring program and a community organization serving the poor. VISTA Volunteers at both Arkansas projects have advanced into administrative functions and helped achieve the broad base of community involvement neccesary for success.

Approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary, VISTA has emerged as the nation's premiere anti-poverty program. The clarity of its purpose and its innovative use of community resources should assure its continuation and strong federal support for many years to come.